

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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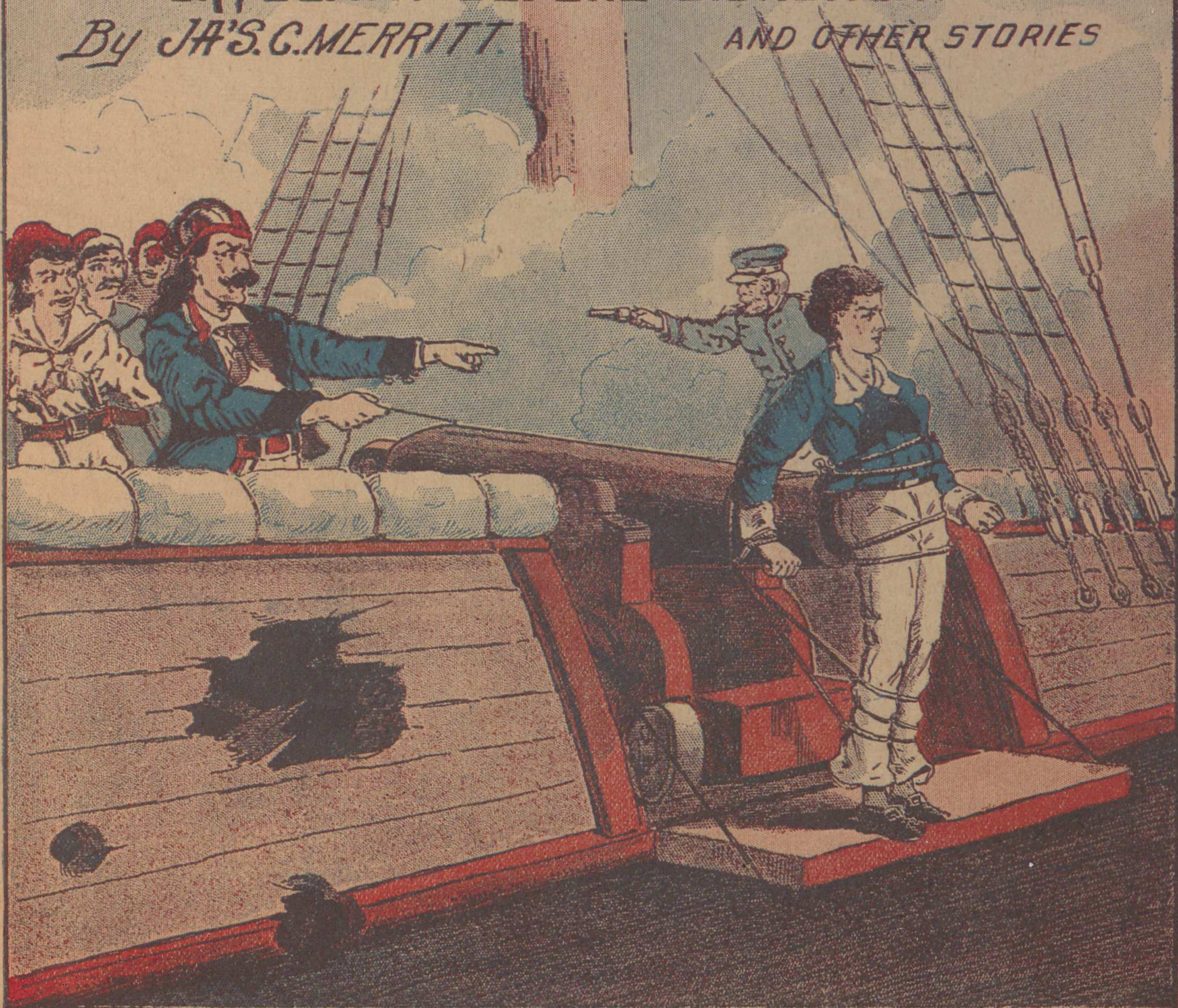
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GUN-BOAT DICK

OR, DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR.

By JAS. C. MERRITT.

AND OTHER STORIES



One of the guns was loaded, and the angry pirates dragged the boy over to the piece and bound him over the muzzle. Santa Cruz seized the lark string in his hand. "Thus perish all my enemies!" he yelled.

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GUNBOAT DICK

—OR—

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

FLYD COIT By JAS. C. MERRITT

CHAPTER OTSELIC

THE HARP OF GOLD.

Midway between the towns of Guanabacoa and Jaruco, on the northern sea coast of the island of Cuba, stood a one-story roadside tavern, in the month of February, 1874.

Like every store on the Ever Faithful Isle, it had a name, and was known thereabouts as La Lira de Oro (The Harp of Gold).

The old hostelry was as much a bodega, or grocery, as a resting place for man and beast, and was picturesque in the extreme.

But one story in height, built of burnt clay of variegated hues, having large open doors, and enormous, iron-barred windows, the peaked roofs, thatched, swept down with huge, overhanging red-tiled eaves which surrounded the ancient building, and afforded shelter from the burning rays of the tropical sun.

Beneath the eaves at the front of the tavern, and facing the white limestone highway, were several tables and chairs for the accommodation of any one requiring refreshing drinks in the open air, where the cool breeze from the ocean, in back, might be wooed, and the torrid heat dissipated.

All along the back of the building stretched the rugged coast line, indented here and there by lagoons, and broken coral reefs, sand bars and arid, chalky cliffs.

The rear of Lira de Oro was washed by the waves of a tiny bay, while on either side grew sentinel cocoa palms, high, gray, slender and topped by clumps of verdure, clustered at the green trunk of which hung bunches of unripe cocoanuts, while from the apex great, wavy leaves swept out and gracefully curved over in the form of umbrellas.

Masses of dried-up looking grass, dotted here and there by enormous cactus bushes, in the midst of an arid waste of rolling ground, stretched away at one side, and across the road the undulating sea of a sugarcane brake billowed off southward, a stream at its side over-arched by stunted trees with prodigious leaves, from amid which hung suspended great bunches of yellow bananas. Here and there a puff of dark-green leaves, on other short trunks, spotted by myriad golden dots of oranges, showed themselves like Will-o'-the-Wisps.

One of the tables was occupied, just as the sun was declining in the West and the shadows of twilight were creeping over the scene, by a man attired in the uniform of a captain in the United States navy—a fine-looking person of about fifty, with a stalwart form, a gray-bearded, bronze face, and carrying a sword.

He was puffing a fragrant cigar, while beside him stood the proprietor of the hostelry, a dark-faced little fellow, who wore pants of black, a white linen shirt and a hippy-hopper hat.

They were engaged in earnest conversation in relation to the cause of the troublesome times in Cuba, while a black servant was saddling a horse, and leading it across the road

toward a large post over which, in the form of a cross, was nailed a plank lettered with the announcement that it was one league to Jaruco.

Beneath this singularly strong sign-board stood a gun on wheels, which had been left there fully a year previous by a mounted guard who had been pursuing the band of a revolutionist through that district toward Matanzas.

The American was the captain of a cruiser of forty-four guns, which had been despatched to Cuba to protect the ships of our country from the depredations of such filibusters who followed like sharks in the wake of the Spanish boats of war.

These pirates became a terror to the Gulf of Mexico and the region of the West Indies, and having formed into a regularly organized band, many unprotected vessels of all nations falling in their way were mercilessly sacrificed after being robbed.

Accompanied by his twin sons, Harry and Dick Griswold, the brave captain had sailed to Cuba on the Thunderer, a fine ironclad, with a well-equipped crew and a large number of marines.

They had fallen in with a vessel sailed by Hernando Santa Cruz, called the Diablo, and had given chase to the ship, poured a disastrous fire upon it, and the Spaniard escaped.

Apprised beforehand that Santa Cruz was the leader of the filibusters cruising those waters, Captain Thomas Griswold was chagrined at the escape of the rascal; but he soon received balm for his anger in the form of some very valuable information.

It was gained from a wounded member of Santa Cruz's band whom he captured, and amounted to the fact that the pirate was to meet his lieutenant at the Lira de Oro to plan an attack to be made on a merchant ship which next day was to leave Matanzas.

Assured that Santa Cruz would go to the rendezvous in secret, as he feared the civil guard who thronged the roads, the old captain resolved to be on the spot in person and apprehend the rascal who occasioned so much trouble along the coast.

This resolve was augmented on account of some news which Griswold received, to the effect that Santa Cruz had overtaken an American trading vessel, captured its crew, and after plundering the ship, sacrificed the lives of all but one man, who escaped to tell the tale of the awful atrocity.

Accordingly, the Thunderer had gone up the coast to an anchorage at Guanabacoa, and the captain, having entered a gig, took only his two sons with him and rowed along the shore of the bay to the back of the old tavern.

The two boys mocked the boat and were awaiting their father's return, while he took up the position in which we now find him, awaiting the appearance of his enemy upon the scene.

The keeper of the hostelry was, he judged, a Cuban, as he spoke in partisan tones of the creoles, and did not seem to like the Spaniards.

Captain Griswold did not fancy the man much, though, as

he seemed to be inordinately inquisitive about the American's affairs, tried hard to learn where he came from, what he wanted, and where he was going, and had a singularly evil look.

The old captain was a bold, fearless man, and if he distrusted Jose Garcia, the innkeeper, he was not afraid of him, and chatted away in fairly good Spanish, meantime keeping a sharp watch upon the road in both directions, in order to detect the approach of Santa Cruz as soon as he appeared.

"The creole and negro insurrection," the captain was saying, "which broke out on this island in 1868, and has been going on up to the present time, was greatly owing to the political change brought about by the revolution in Spain, when Queen Isabella was driven from the throne, I think."

"But, senor," replied Garcia, insinuatingly, "how about the measure passed in the Madrid ministry, in 1870, originating from the colonial minister, Moret y Prendergast, declaring every black of sixty should become free, and emancipating all the unborn offspring of the slaves?"

"Bosh! That law was never enforced by the Spanish adventurers who came to the Queen of the Antilles, under the distinctive title of the Loyal Party, to govern the island and rob it of every real thing they could steal, by barbarous taxation. The 'peninsulares' are a body of provincial Spaniards who upheld slavery vigorously only to reap a golden harvest for their own coffers."

Garcia's brow darkened for a moment, then he gravely replied:

"True! True! The proof of their avarice lies recorded in the ferocious, bloody strife which the Cubans carried on, in a bold stroke to throw off the yoke of their oppressors and emulate the nobly glorious republic of the United States of America."

"Poor, struggling Cubans!" sadly exclaimed Griswold. "Noble as are your motives to gain freedom, your fighting all in vain!"

Just as the old captain gave utterance to this feeling expression, there suddenly sounded the distant report of a pistol, coming from the direction of the water, at the back of the tavern, a wild howl of intense agony, followed by a volley of expletives in the Spanish language, and then the patter of flying footsteps approaching.

An ejaculation burst from Griswold's lips; he bounded to his feet, and as Jose Garcia recoiled with a guilty look upon his dark face, the old captain sprang at him in a fit of ungovernable fury and clutched him by the throat.

"Traitor!" he panted, in a storm of rage. "Your guilty looks betray you! Admit what deviltry you have done or I'll kill you!"

"Nothing! By the Blessed Virgin, nothing, senor!" gurgled the man, raising his trembling hands to drag aside the powerful clutch Griswold had fastened upon his throat. "I beg of you, for heaven's sake, to release me, I am guiltless."

A hard, stern, unrelenting look passed over the old warrior's face, as he noticed the terrified air of the man, and he replied:

"Whine, you cur, whine! But I shall soon see! Ah, here come Harry and Dick at a run. Rascality, as I feared!"

The innkeeper struggled hard to get away, and made a motion to draw a weapon, but Griswold was too quick for him and snatched the long-bladed knife away and flung it out on the road, leaving Garcia defenseless.

Around an angle of the house rushed the captain's twin sons. They were both of the age of sixteen, exactly alike in every outward respect, being sturdy lads, of good build, clad in white pants, blue jackets and sailor shirts, around the necks of which silk scarfs were knotted, while upon their heads they wore jaunty little caps.

Clear of features, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked, with a tan of sunburn and having well-cut profiles, they were a handsome pair.

Harry held a revolver in his hand, and both wore expressions upon their faces of the utmost alarm, which was visibly intensified when they beheld Jose Garcia gripped in the clutch of their determined father's hands.

"What is the matter, Harry?" demanded the old captain, as the two boys rushed pantingly up to him.

"That man is in league with Santa Cruz, sir!" gasped the boy, pointing at the trembling Garcia. "He is a Spaniard!"

"Ha! and he tried to make me believe that he was a Cuban!"

"Fly to the boat, father; we are surrounded by peril!"

"What do you mean by that, Harry?"

"The rooms in the back of this tavern are filling with Santa Cruz's men. Dick and I were conversing in the gig when we overheard them plotting inside the house. Santa Cruz glanced out of the window. He saw us, and was upon the point of firing, when I drew my revolver and shot him!"

"Dead?" eagerly asked the old naval officer.

"No. But I have wounded him!"

"Good! And this beast!" here he shook Garcia violently, "has deceived me grossly by declaring no one was inside, and that he did not know Santa Cruz at all."

A murmur of voices reached their ears at this juncture, coming from the interior of the tavern; and as they recoiled, dragging Garcia with them, out of the tavern rushed the burly figure of Hernando Santa Cruz, followed by a score of his men, all armed to the teeth and wearing expressions of countenance of the most ferocious fury.

The moment they saw the old captain and his two sons, a fiendish yell of impotent exultation burst hoarsely from his lips, and they rushed toward them, brandishing their weapons.

"It will be a fight to the death!" grimly muttered Griswold, as he cast an anxious look at his two sons, "and may heaven help you, my boys. They recognize us now, and if we fail to beat them, or escape, our lives will pay the penalty!"

CHAPTER II.

A MODERN CRUCIFIXION.

The two sailor boys each held a revolver in his hand as the horde of ruffians rushed out of the tavern, and Captain Tom Griswold kept his grip fastened upon the windpipe of the innkeeper.

"Hold!" cried the old sea-dog, in stern tones. "Stop where you are, Hernando Santa Cruz, or I shall kill your accomplice!"

"Ave Maria!" ejaculated the rascal, coming to an abrupt pause with his men; "it is the captain of the accursed American gunboat which nearly sank us last week, and he has his two sons with him. And, caramba! the unlucky Jose is being throttled in his hands!"

The Spaniard did not know whether to advance or retreat for an instant, as Garcia was a valuable auxiliary, whom he could not well afford to lose just then.

He was a man of about forty, gigantic and massive of stature, clad in blue, a speckled scarf around his neck, his feet and legs encased in top-boots, and his dark, evil face lit up by a pair of glaring black eyes on either side of a large, broad nose, no vestige of beard upon his face, and his hair as jet black as his eyebrows.

The crowd who surrounded him were a sinister lot, the feature of every one being stamped with the vivid impress of rank rascality—men of every color, race and nation, and fit companions of a person so brutal and lawless as Hernando Santa Cruz.

There was a gash upon the forehead of the pirate—for pirate and nothing else he certainly was—showing where the bullet from Harry Griswold's revolver had furrowed the flesh, causing a stream of blood to flow down the rascal's cheek.

For an instant the Spanish and the Americans leaders stood glaring at each other, Tom Griswold secretly regretting that he had not brought a guard with him, despite the protestations he received that Santa Cruz would go alone to the Harp of Gold.

Then Griswold exclaimed, in furious tones:

"I have been deceived, but shall accomplish my purpose."

"Unhand my friend!" shouted Santa Cruz. "Release him or I shall order my men to fall upon and hew you to pieces!"

"Then take him!" exclaimed the man-o'-war's man.

And so saying he raised Garcia up over his head and hurled the treacherous man directly at Santa Cruz, the innkeeper's body striking the pirate full in the face, and knocking him over backward against his fellows, aching, raving and wild.

"Your life shall pay for your temerity!" hissed Santa Cruz, and turning to his followers he cried, excitedly: "Attack them! Cut them down! Have no mercy! They have come to capture and kill us! Strike, in self-defense!"

A hoarse roar swelled up from the ruffians, and as they sprang toward the brave old man and his two gallant sons, Griswold flashed out his sword and cried:

"To kill me you must lose half your number!"

He threw himself in a defensive attitude, bravely seconded by Harry and Dick, and as the wild crowd rushed up to them both boys fired shot after shot into their ranks.

Not a bullet missed its mark; shout after shout of mortal agony and wild rage pealed out on the twilight air, and as many of the pirates fell motionless or writhing upon the ground, the old captain, wielding his flashing sword, sprang into the midst of his foes and fought with the desperation of a maniac.

A terrible scene ensued.

With dogged perseverance, for the pirates realized what a rich prize Griswold and his two sons would be to capture, where a gap was made in their ranks another man would fill it up, and the combat waxed hot to a furious degree.

It seemed for a while as if that old warrior and his valiant sons bore charmed lives, for not a bullet hit them, and the keen-bladed daggers thrust at their hearts missed their marks.

From the beginning, though, the battle had been unequal, and despite the bravery of the three assailed Americans, they were, one after another, overwhelmed, torn, cut and bleeding.

Flung upon the ground, and bound hand and foot, they were finally rendered helpless, amid fully half the killed and wounded men who had so courageously backed up their hostile enemy.

The victory was won at a fearful cost, but the pirate could not help admiring the dauntless courage of the father and his two sons in their gallant fight for life.

"I have won the day!" hissed Santa Cruz, bending over the prostrate Griswold, "and it has cost me dear. But we hate you with an undying feeling which you originated by assailing us with your gunboat. I would gladly kill you on the spot, Thomas Griswold, but as you would be a very valuable aid to me with your knowledge of naval affairs, I will spare your life upon one condition."

"I will make no conditions with a low cut-throat!" proudly replied the captured but not subdued old officer. "I am at your mercy and do not crave your clemency. But," he added, with tears starting to his eyes as he glanced at his two darling boys, "in heaven's name spare my sons."

The pirate's ugly face grew satanic in a smile of evil joy as he discovered this weak spot in his enemy's heart.

"I will spare them upon the condition I proposed," he said, coldly, as his men grouped around the three prisoners and regarded them with looks of extreme hate.

"Name your terms!" exclaimed Griswold, bitterly.

"You must join my ranks."

"Never!"

"Then you and your sons die!"

"Do not give in, father!" cried Dick.

"We are not afraid of death!" added Harry.

"You have your answer, then!" exclaimed the old captain.

"Ha! Dare you refuse?"

"Ay! Give me death before dishonor!"

"Then your doom is sealed!"

"We are Americans, and fear no foes. Do your worst. We defy you!" cried Griswold, in thrilling tones.

The pirate gnashed his white, gleaming teeth, a black scowl resting ominously upon his massive brow.

"By heavens," he cried, ferociously, "your defiance is accepted! You shall die a terrible death for your false pride. At large you are a powerful enemy and one whom I feared. But now your earthly career shall come to an end. Prepare to perish! I shall break the indomitable spirit of your sons. Pancho!" he called to one of his men, and, pointing at the old captain as he spoke. "With some of the others, carry this carrion over to yonder sign-board and crucify him upon it! By heavens, he shall know what it is to brave me! And you, Antonio, go into the Harp of Gold, bring forth powder and shot, load yonder gun, and by torture I shall force an end to this matter which these accursed Yankees little dream of!"

A shudder of horror passed over Tom Griswold upon hearing this command, while the two boys paled and cast upon each other looks of intense anguish, which they could not repress.

The men thereupon seized hold of the old man roughly and carried him over to the sign-post, where, with the ut-

most cruelty, he was nailed hand and foot to the structure, and left there, crucified.

The agony of the two boys to see their parent thus crucified was terrible in the extreme, tears of compassion flowing from their eyes, the blood chilled with horror in their veins, and a feeling of intense hatred raging in their hearts against these cruel, inhuman barbarians.

"Father!" shrieked Dick, wildly, "accede to their wishes! Save yourself!"

"Never! Heavens, how tortured I am. Avenge my death!" groaned the old captain.

"It is too late to save yourself!" interposed Santa Cruz, who understood English. "You shall hang there a corpse until the vultures peck out your eyes and tear the flesh from your bones. Ah, the cannon is loaded! Your suffering will soon be over. And you," he added, viciously, to Harry, as he jerked him upon his feet, "being such a good shot with the pistol as to wound me, certainly can shoot a gun as well, and shall be your father's executioner! See, the piece is loaded, a dozen yards from the crucified man, and aimed at his body. You must fire it!"

"Spare me! Heavens!" wailed the unhappy boy, trembling like an aspen. "Spare me such unheard-of cruelty. Have you no heart—no conscience? Remember—he is my own father!"

"And do you remember that you three came here to seek my life—shot me—defied me—tried to kill me, and have despatched and wounded a dozen of my brave followers? How can you expect any clemency from me? No, no, no! I have no mercy. You must kill that man! I will hear of no refusal!"

"Harry," wailed the unhappy captain, "obey the monster. It will be a mercy to me. Behold my suffering—it is awful! End it, I beseech you, and my dying breath shall be a blessing upon you!"

A groan escaped the half-maddened boy's lips.

He was a tender-hearted little fellow, and devotedly loved his father.

His temperament, unlike that of his brother Dick, was more inclined toward peace than war, and the harrowing feelings he then underwent were of a poignancy that baffles all description.

That his father spoke truly—that it would be a mercy of him to kill the suffering man outright—he had not the remotest doubt; but the deed was so repulsive and terrible he could not make up his mind to do it.

"I cannot—oh, I cannot!" he moaned, as the hot tears trickled down his pallid cheeks, and his figure shook with emotion too pitiful to be explained. "Torture me!" he added, in frenzied tones, as he turned to the fiendish Santa Cruz. "Burn me alive—tear me limb from limb, but in the name of our Saviour spare me this awful deed!"

Santa Cruz was inexorable and replied in cruel tones:

"No. I shall punish you fitly for what you did to me!"

His men were grouped at one side, near the prostrate figure of Dick, gazing on with serious faces; and Santa Cruz stood beside the gun with the boy whom he had liberated of his bonds, while high in the air above the crucified man circled the dark bodies of some vultures which had been attracted by a foul instinct to the spot.

Harry had fallen upon his knees before the pirate, and the lengthening shadows of twilight were deepening into darkness over the desolate, tragic scene, a soft breeze coming in from the sea and not a sound was heard.

Santa Cruz ignited a piece of candle, thrust it into Harry's hand, and drawing an ugly-looking knife from his belt, he cried, sternly:

"Fire the gun, or I will stab you to death!"

"Death before dishonor! Death before dishonor!" came a low, moaning voice faintly through the gathering gloom.

The words were uttered by his unfortunate father, and pierced his heart like a fiery sword, causing him to spring up and cry, wildly:

"No, I shall not do it! Death before dishonor! Did you hear him say it, you demon? See! He has fainted, thank heavens!"

A fierce ejaculation burst from Santa Cruz's lips, and he dealt the boy a furious blow with his fist, felling Harry to the ground senseless, and lighting a match he touched off the gun.

There came a thunderous crash that shook the earth, a terrific belch of fire and smoke, the wild scream of the shot, and all was over.

Gradually darkness settled upon the gloomy scene, down circled the vultures nearer to the remains of the gallant old officer, and the wind arose and sighed across the landscape, the burden of its sad refrain being the last words of the doomed man:

"Death before dishonor! Death before dishonor! Death before dishonor!"

CHAPTER III.

WALKING THE PLANK.

The Diablo lay at anchor, around the headland, in an other small cove, and having transferred the two boys on board with his men, Hernando Santa Cruz at once set sail.

But scarcely had his ship passed out upon the dark blue waters, in the mellow light of the tropical moon, which was rising upon the eastern horizon, when the pirate descried the approach of the man-of-war which had been under the command of the unfortunate Thomas Griswold.

An hour had elapsed since the discharge of the gun by which the old commander's life had been sacrificed, the thunderous report alarming those on board the man-of-war to such an extent that sail was raised, and she was sailed directly toward the point from whence the discharge came, to discover its cause.

The pirate's vessel was seen and recognized at once by the commanding officer upon the Thunderer, who immediately hailed the Diablo with a shot across her bows, as a caustic command for her to haul to.

Well knowing that such a course would end in disaster, the pirate captain paid no heed to the command, but ordering all sail made on his craft, he pointed his bowsprit away to the eastward and sped off before the west wind.

The American gunboat was but half a mile astern, and coming up fast upon the pirate, when an exchange of shots from the guns on both vessels was made.

A tremendous, circular hole was smashed into the side of the Diablo beneath the port gangway, by a ball from a ten-inch gun; but before any further damage could be done, as the outlaw's vessel was superior to the warship in point of speed, she soon out-distanced the Thunderer and made her escape.

Her course was shaped along the coast all that night, the wind dying down after she got out of sight of her formidable pursuer, and daylight found her hovering near the Pan of Matanzas, a great sugar-loaf cliff near the entrance to the bay, at which spot the pirate was to lurk in wait for a richly-laden ship to plunder.

It was to get information in regard to this vessel that he met his accomplice at the Lira de Oro the preceding night, and having been told that he would win an easy battle and reap a rich booty, Santa Cruz laid his plans of action.

The vessel was due to sail from Matanzas at an early hour, at the head of the narrow, shallow bay, and Santa Cruz had hardly completed his preparations for a violent assault upon the doomed ship when a lookout apprised him that she was coming.

Locked down in the vile-odored hole of the Diablo, Harry and Dick spent a restless night, bemoaning the terrible fate which had overtaken poor Captain Griswold, their tears flowing freely as they talked the matter over, and strove to cheer each other up by words of hope.

The two brothers loved each other devotedly, having been born and reared together, ever having been inseparable companions in play, in school, and when sailing upon the seas in their father's noble ship, after the death of their beloved mother in New York.

"It is of no use, Harry," said Dick, in mournful tones, when the light of day broke over the surging sea. "Words of cheer and comfort are of no avail. I am miserable in spirit—utterly crushed. Could we but escape from the power of these miscreants, I would devote the rest of my life to the purpose of avenging the terrible injury they have done to us."

"And I, too, Dick. But it is useless to think of escape," replied Harry. "They will next take our lives, and that will end the matter."

"You look upon the darkest side of our trouble, I fear."

"No, Dick, it is not that. I have a feeling in my heart that I am not long for this world now. It is no silly pre-

sentiment, but a dreadful conviction which is bound to be realized."

His words were prophetic, and struck a deathly chill to the heart of his anxious brother—a feeling which he never forgot in all the rest of the strangely eventful fate that remorselessly pursued him.

They lay side by side upon the hard floor, and through the hole which the ball from the gunboat had torn in the hull they saw the light of day streaming over the sea.

As the shaft of light shot in upon the floor, Dick's roving glance fell on an old knife lying on top of an empty powder-keg a short distance away, and an eager look crossed his face.

"Harry! Harry!" he gasped. "See—there is a means for our escape. Look! Upon the keg! A knife. Let us secure it. We can easily cut our bonds upon its edge, then drop into the sea through that hole, and swim to the shore, unperceived by our enemies."

This news sent a thrill of hope through Harry Griswold.

It was just as Dick rolled his body to the keg, knocked the knife down, and pushed it over to his brother to hold, so that he could sever his bonds, when the ship came out of the bay and the pirate opened fire unexpectedly with his guns.

"More trouble!" exclaimed Dick, in tones of amazement. "With whom can they be fighting now, Harry? Just listen to the tramp of their feet upon the deck, how excitedly they shout to each other, and the roaring of rifles and small arms."

They listened intently, and soon heard enough to convince them of the nature of the attacked craft, then they heard those upon the other vessel presently return the pirate's fire.

Judging by the sounds, they soon became convinced that a desperate conflict was passing overhead.

Then they renewed their efforts to get free.

By the utmost persistence, Dick succeeded in severing his bonds.

This was hardly accomplished, when they were suddenly startled to hear somebody coming down in the hold, and a hasty glance at the ladder exposed the burly figure of Santa Cruz descending, and carrying an ignited lantern upon his arm.

"Fly! Save yourself! Go before you are seen!" gasped Harry.

"Desert you? Never! I would die first!" muttered Dick, firmly.

"No, no! Never mind about me. You can do no good now. At liberty you can at least try to rescue me. Go, I tell you. He is almost down the ladder. A minute more and it will be too late!"

Dick did not hesitate any longer.

He knew that with his freedom he could accomplish what he could not do imprisoned in the gloomy, rat-run hold of the pirate's vessel; moreover, by joining issues with the ship which Santa Cruz attacked, he might aid them to whip the pirate.

It would then be an easy matter to rescue Harry.

Obeying the imploring look of his brother, Dick said nothing, but rushed over to the hole in the hull and dove through, headforemost, into the sea, the hole just admitting the passage of his body and no more; he then vanished from Harry's sight.

A minute later and Santa Cruz was down in the hold.

He raised his lantern, peered around, saw Harry, and approached.

"I want you and your brother to come up on deck!" he said.

"For my part, I can go; but my brother has escaped," said Harry.

"What!" roared the sinister wretch in alarm. "He escaped? How?"

"By the aid of the knife lying beside me."

"Maledictiones!" hissed Santa Cruz, furiously. "When was it?"

"Some time ago. He passed through yonder hole into the sea!"

Grinding his teeth with anger, Santa Cruz glanced around, and saw that the boy told him the truth.

His rage knew no bounds.

He raved and swore like a madman for a while; then he suddenly remembered what brought him down in the hold, and cutting the bonds on Harry's legs, he forced the boy to

go upon deck with him, where the fight was yet progressing. "Now what do you want?" demanded the boy.

"A gunner. I have heard that you and your brother were carefully trained, and acted as gunners on board the Thunderer. Both of my gunners have just perished, and no one else knows just how to work the artillery I have on deck."

"And do you expect me to do it for you?" scornfully asked Harry.

"I demand it of you, at the risk of losing your life if you refuse."

Harry carefully scanned the sea, but seeing no trace of his brother he concluded that Dick must have escaped to the other ship.

Instead, though, he saw the sea marked by the passage of a school of sharks, attracted there by the scene of carnage then going on, for the crew of the merchantman were making a gallant fight, every one from captain to cabin boy having armed himself.

Several of the pirate's crew lay wounded and dead upon the deck; others, injured by shot, had their heads, arms and bodies swathed in bandages, and all wore a ferocious aspect.

The merchantman was endeavoring to escape back into the bay, but the pirate's vessel had so interposed itself in the entrance, and the outlaws kept up such an incessant and deadly fire with small arms, that it was frustrated.

So the ship was driven out upon the sea, and as her crew was poorly armed in comparison with the pirate's, it seemed as if Santa Cruz and his rovers would overpower the others.

Moreover, the pirate was possessed of four guns of heavy calibre, and as the merchantman fled the pirate pursued her.

Harry was now Santa Cruz's only reliance to work the guns, as he feared that in the inexperienced hands of any of his men they might explode the heavy ordnance and create much damage.

But the boy was determined not to aid the pirate.

"Your demand is useless; I refuse to help you!" he exclaimed.

"Look out, boy!" warningly said Santa Cruz, a flush of rage spreading over his dark face and a wicked gleam in his snapping black eyes. "Your father defied me and you saw his ending. Take heed that you do not meet with his fate."

"I have no fear, but plenty of hatred for you!" exclaimed Harry.

"You shall be made to feel my power, rash youth!"

A reckless laugh pealed from the boy's lips—a laugh full of derision and contempt for the rascal, which served to increase his wrath.

"You have done all the injury you can do me, you murderer!" he cried, bitterly. "And I care nothing for anything you may do now!"

Santa Cruz drew a huge pistol and aimed it at the boy.

"Promise to join my crew!" he hissed, malevolently. "Promise to obey me. Promise, as you hope for salvation, to discharge one of those guns as I direct, or by the powers infernal I shall make you!"

"You already have my answer. I repeat it—I refuse."

"Then your death be upon your own head."

"Do your worst. My father's motto is mine. Death before dishonor."

"Open the gangway on the port side, and rig out a plank!" he shouted.

The men saw that he was in a terrible passion, and hastened to obey.

Within a few moments a plank was lashed with ropes at one end to the deck, the rest of it protruding through the gangway.

Santa Cruz pointed at it, and, turning to Harry, he said, in a voice that trembled with impotent rage:

"There lies your road to eternity. Obey me or walk off, bound as your arms are, into the sea and perish. Which shall it be?"

For a moment the boy's lips quivered.

He felt that he was upon the brink of the grave.

His strange presentiment was coming true in a terrible manner.

Then thoughts of his brave old father's ending returned vividly to his mind, bringing tears to his eyes, and he thought of the uncertainty of his brother's fate.

A cold, bitter feeling entered his heart.

In a moment his resolution was formed.

"Which shall it be?" again roared Santa Cruz, passionately, for all the bad Spanish blood in his evil nature was aroused at the boy's calmly stubborn defiance.

"Death before dishonor!"

Calmly the words fell from the brave, dauntless boy's lips, and the pirate read in the steady, unflinching glance of Harry's fearless eyes a deathless resolve to keep his word.

Like the lava of a volcano burned the blood in the pirate's body. The veins upon his forehead and temples standing out, swelled upon the verge of bursting, an ominous scowl upon his massive features, and his face contorted to the semblance of a fiend's. But mastering his warring feelings, he hissed:

"So be it, then! Go—go to your doom!"

He pointed at the plank, and with not a word, but a calm smile upon his face, the brave boy walked out to the end.

All those of the rascally crew who were not busy crowded to the side, while Santa Cruz, clutching a pistol in his hand, stood over the body of one of his men opposite the open gangway.

The boy glanced down at the water.

Beneath him his shuddering glance saw that dreadful school of sharks.

In every direction the sea gleamed beautifully beneath the morning sun, and in the back of him leered the faces of the savage crew.

"Will you relent?" demanded Santa Cruz, fiercely.

"Never. To the end I defy you!" replied the boy.

"I will count three. Then jump. If you don't, I'll shoot you!"

A deathly stillness followed this remark.

"One!" exclaimed Hernando Santa Cruz, in ferocious tones.

The doomed boy's eyes were turned heavenward in silent prayer.

"Two!" came the harsh voice a moment later.

Not a muscle moved in Harry's face, but it became fairly angelic.

"Three!"

The word was hardly spoken when the boy leaped from the plank.

Down shot his body to the water; it struck with a splash, and as it was sinking the sharks dove after it with a horrible movement which plainly told that the brave boy had met death before dishonor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RAFT.

The moment poor Harry Griswold sprang from the plank into the sea he was literally devoured alive by the sharks!

More fortunate than he, Dick, his twin brother, succeeded in reaching the merchant vessel, yelled for help, was taken on board, told his story and witnessed Harry's doom from the deck.

An awful cry of horror and consternation burst frantically from his lips, and he rushed to the side with the intention of flinging himself into the sea to perish with his brother. But the hand of the kindly captain withheld him.

"Self-destruction? Avast, my lad! Don't yer do it!" he cried.

"Oh, pitiful heaven, sir, I have told you my wretched story! You know that my life has no further charms!" wailed the anguished boy, as hot tears coursed down his cheeks. "Look at my position: There was my father crucified and shot, and my poor, poor brother was made to walk the plank, and has been eaten by sharks!"

"Horrible!" assented the captain. "But be a man—be an American! Live to avenge 'em—don't act like a baby—don't be womanish. Lord save us! Whar's all yer spunk?"

These words fairly electrified the desperate boy.

He drew back, dashed the scalding tears from his eyes, mastered his violent emotion, and with a sudden resolution his face became grim, stern and fixed as he replied:

"Yes—yes! You are right! I shall avenge them, if it takes a lifetime, and costs every drop of blood in my veins! I wish to heaven I was on board the Thunderer, and had command of her forty-four guns just now; I would blow Hernando Santa Cruz, the Diablo, and all of that piratical crew to pieces. But my time shall come!"

"Can yer work a gun, my lad?"

"I was educated by the best gunner in the American navy, and they call me by the sobriquet of 'Gunboat Dick'."

"Then, by jingo, thar's a bit of iron up forrard, under that tarpaulin, an' a power of powder an' shot blow decks, as might sarve us in good stid jist now."

He referred to a gun which they as yet scarcely had time to use, and with a thrill of joy the boy hurried up forward and began to prepare the weapon for service.

The merchantman, called the Yankee Girl, like all trading, passenger and freight ships cruising those waters in time of war, was provided with defensive weapons.

She was a ship of 3,000 tons burden, hailing from Halifax, laden with a miscellaneous cargo, and carried a crew of twenty able seamen, in command of Captain John Dixon.

Several of the sailors had been wounded during the exchange of shots, but all were armed, and willing to sacrifice their lives rather than suffer capture by Hernando Santa Cruz.

The vessel was bound for Brazil, via the island of Cuba, and seeing that Santa Cruz prevented his entrance into the bay of Matanzas again, the skipper stood out to sea.

The Diablo was coming on in hot pursuit, the black schooner cleaving the waves like a fish, beating northward against the west wind, and the whole rascally crew on deck, prepared to fight hard for the prize.

Santa Cruz had been apprised by his lieutenant at La Lira de Oro that the merchantman carried a large amount of specie on board for the Brazilian Government, and it was to gain this booty he was so eager to capture the vessel.

"We have at least one advantage of the brute," thought Dick as the ordnance was loaded, "and that is this gun. Although Santa Cruz is armed with four larger weapons, all his gunners are dead, and he has no one to work them with any effect."

On came the Diablo with a rush, and lessening the half mile that intervened between her and the Yankee Girl, the pirate assumed charge of one of the guns himself, and fired a shot after the fugitive.

Luckily the gun, was incorrectly aimed, though, and he made no allowance for the swell of the sea; hence the shot sped wide of his mark, and fell harmlessly into the water.

"I think I can do much better than that," Dick exclaimed, as the sailors finished lashing the weapon at an open gangway. "Now, captain, come up in the wind an instant and I'll drive a ball through her hull!"

Around rushed the Yankee Girl and every one anxiously watched the boy gunner as he sighted the piece and touched the priming with a match.

A thundering roar pealed out on the morning air, a terrific shock ran through the old ship as the flame and smoke poured from the throat of the gun, and a wild howl from the ball followed, as it went flying through the air, straight toward its mark.

The missile of destruction sped across the deck of the pirate, creating devastation enough to make Santa Cruz quail, and the Yankee Girl veered off on the starboard tack again, while a loud cheer swelled up from the crew.

"Sail, ho! Sail, ho!" shouted the lookout up in the foretop just then, and the captain eagerly cried:

"Where away, Sam—where away, lad?"

"Off the port beam, sir, a-comin' up the coast."

"What do yer make her out ter be?"

"Looks mighty like a man-o'-war."

"The Thunderer! my own craft!" cried Dick, exultantly.

"Wear, up thar!" shouted the captain to the quartermaster. "Le' go yer hellum, an' come about on the port tack!"

As the vessel rode up in the wind and lay over to the southwest the pirate was seen to fill away free to the eastward very suddenly, starting his sheets before the wind as if he had desisted the approach of the frigate, and wished to give it as wide a berth as possible.

Dick had the gun loaded again, and as the Yankee Girl came about the boy let drive another shot at the enemy.

The ball struck the stern of the Diablo upon the port side at the run forward of the rudder-post, and tore a huge hole in the planking, into which the water poured as it rolled up astern in wavy billows.

"Well done! Well done!" cried the old skipper, delightedly.

"It may sink her if Santa Cruz does not repair the damage soon!" muttered the boy, grimly. "I only regret that it was not the pirate's head. Ah! now I recognize the newcomer, and she is certainly the Thunderer. She has been lying behind that headland, I presume, and, hearing the discharge of weapons, has come to investigate the cause. Look, captain, what a clean pair of heels Santa Cruz is showing.

He wants to escape now, as he has no love for the Thunderer's guns. How the tables have been turned upon the wretch! I wish to be set on board my own craft since I have saved your vessel from destruction and your crew from death——"

"An' it shall be done, my lad."

"But first," continued Dick, "if you wish to punish yonder scoundrel and are willing to pursue him a ways, I will make an effort to send her to the bottom with a shot."

"Ay, I will!" exclaimed the captain.

He was enraged against Santa Cruz, and, seeing the gunboat coming on to his assistance, he had not the least hesitation in giving orders to pursue the fugitive.

The Stars and Stripes were sent aloft amid the cheers of the sailors, and away shot the Yankee Girl after the Diablo.

For some reason the merchant vessel rapidly overhauled the pirate, who kept luffing up in the wind, and when they arrived within fifty fathoms of her, Dick fired another shot.

It struck the deck of Santa Cruz's schooner, swept away one of the skylights and injured several of the Spanish buccaneers.

On rushed the Yankee Girl.

But she was going straight to her doom!

As she drew nearer to the Diablo, two guns were fired from the deck of the Spaniard; the shots struck the ship below the water line, huge holes were torn through the planks and the hold began to fill rapidly with water.

The damage was irreparable, and the wildest confusion at once ensued on board the merchant vessel.

The ship was sinking fast, and all hope of saving her having been abandoned, they headed her for shore in hopes that she might founder in shoal water.

The pirate, though, seeing his advantage, bore his vessel about and came racing back to the doomed ship!

Half of the crew had taken to the boats, and the captain was having three kegs of specie brought up on deck to have it on one of the life rafts, when Santa Cruz hove alongside, grappled the ship, and the pirates swarmed over on the deck.

Dick stood by the open gangway, with the captain and two of the men, endeavoring to launch the raft.

"Lord help us now—it's too late!" gasped the skipper.

"No, no! Shove again! We will save the gold from their clutches!" hotly cried Dick. "This is all he is after—his stupidity leads him to brave the oncoming man-o'-war. Once we launch the raft the gunboat will save the specie!"

Cheered by Dick's words, the captain and the two sailors exerted themselves again, and with a splash the raft went through the open gangway, down into the sea.

All the rest of the sailors had taken fright and sprang into the water when the pirates reached the deck.

As it would have been sheer madness for Dick, the skipper and the two sailors to remain now, they dove overboard.

They all got on the raft, and just then a boat from the ruined Yankee Girl darted toward them, when a gun from the deck of the pirate was discharged at it.

The ball smashed the boat to pieces, the Diablo left the side of the derelict Yankee Girl, and when the raft drifted away with the four last ones to leave the vessel, Santa Cruz brought a gun to bear upon it from the deck of his craft.

"Jump off that raft into the sea!" roared Santa Cruz, "or I fire!"

"May the good Lord help us!" gasped the captain. "Must we obey?"

"No!" cried Dick, fiercely. "You have this gold in your trust. Death before dishonor! Defy the scoundrel! If he fires to kill us, he will sink this raft and lose the money!"

"Will you go?" yelled Santa Cruz.

His vessel was now abreast of the raft, only a few yards off.

The old skipper's face was white, but determined, and as he glanced at the ruin of his ship, tears started to his eyes and he cried:

"Never! Shoot, if yer will! We defies yer!"

Boom! roared the gun, ere the last word was spoken.

There came a terrific shock as the shot struck the raft, smashed it to pieces, sunk the gold, and sent the bodies of the four unfortunates flying up in the air with the debris.

A piece of plank struck Dick upon the head.

"I am killed!" he moaned in anguish.

Then his senses fled.

CHAPTER V.

CONCHITA.

When Dick recovered his senses and glanced around, he found himself lying in the cabin of the *Diablo*, and the afternoon far advanced, two men in the room attracting his attention.

One of the men was Hernando Santa Cruz and the other his first mate, a black-bearded fellow, with a swarthy face, whose head was swathed in a crimsoned bandage, as he had been injured from having been shot in the fray.

The two rascals sat a small, round table, talking in Spanish, with which language Dick was very familiar.

The boy listened without betraying his return to consciousness.

"You say the American frigate is out of sight, Sebastian Gonzalez?" demanded Santa Cruz of the other.

"Senor, we are well around Cayo Romano, and by night-fall we will come to anchor in Puerto Principe, as you commanded."

"Good! The Thunderer is a slow sailer, else she would have overtaken us while we were combating the Yankee Girl. As it was, by Santa Maria! we have lost the treasure, and, in fact, all she carried, which we planned to secure, and nothing remains for us but that confounded boy!"

"And even his carcass might have been lost, had we not picked him up senseless from the water after that shot."

"True. Yet I may find use for him in future."

"What can you do with the meddlesome cub?"

"You know I am to secure a commission from the king entitling me to cruise in the capacity of a privateersman for the Spanish Government. It will prove to be an excellent cloak for my real work, for no matter what piracies I may commit, the Spanish crown will apparently sanction it, and protect me. Once I am empowered, I can make use of this boy as a hostage, in event of my getting in trouble. He is the son of a renowned naval officer, and consequently of some importance."

"You say that you heard he is a good gunner, too?"

"One of the best, young as he is, in the American navy. If I could impress him into allegiance with our band, he would prove in that respect an invaluable auxiliary to me."

At this juncture the mate was summoned up on deck.

Dick was thereby left alone in the cabin with Santa Cruz, who had withdrawn a cigar from his pocket, and sat with his back to the boy, reflectively smoking.

A thrill of fierce joy passed over Dick.

"I am alone with the inhuman murderer of my poor father and brother," thought Dick, "and shall avenge their terrible deaths by killing him, as I have sworn to do!"

The bitter feelings rankling in the heart of Dick Griswold were of the most intense kind, for the atrocities of this ocean robber had left him bereft of all he had near and dear to him in the world.

The walls of the cabin were decorated with arms of all kinds, and as the boy's roving glance fell upon a rack hanging directly over his head, he reached up and seized a dagger.

It was a buck-horn, having a long, slender blade.

As his fingers clutched the weapon, he slid down from the sofa upon which he had been lying; but at the first movement a throb passed over him, apprising the captive boy that the blow he got on his head from the plank had been a severe one.

He felt faint and dizzy, but a grim resolution buoyed him up, and he crept across the floor toward the pirate.

"I'll strike him like an assassin, this way!" thought the boy, and he came to a pause.

He was high spirited and honorable to the core.

Much as he hated the pirate, wild as he was to make Santa Cruz pay for his villainy, by suffering the death penalty, his soul revolted against assassinating the rascal.

On the other hand, superior in size and dexterity as the man was, it seemed to Dick that if he allowed Santa Cruz to have an equal chance, the pirate would kill him.

But the proud nature of the boy conquered.

"I cannot kill him this way, it is too vile. Rather would I accept death before the dishonor of being a low assassin!"

He stood with the knife poised over Santa Cruz's back, but lowered it again, and grasping the man by the arm and giving him a sudden jerk, he exclaimed:

"Defend your life, Santa Cruz, I am going to kill you!"

"Caramba!" ejaculated the pirate, springing to his feet, and wrenching himself from Dick's grasp, he recoiled a step, his hand involuntarily grasping the hilt of his own knife.

"On guard!" cried Dick, furiously, and he rushed at the man.

The pirate pulled his knife from its sheath.

"So you have recovered, eh?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I hold your life in my hands. But I give you an equal chance. Only one of us can live. I owe you a debt of vengeance which can only be wiped out with your life."

"Stripling!" sneered Santa Cruz, viewing Dick disdainfully, "put up your weapon and save your life while you can."

"Never! Take that!" cried Dick, aiming a blow at him.

"Ha!" cried Santa Cruz, as the knife pierced his clothing, scratched his skin, and caused him a twinge of pain as he sprang back. "You are vicious! Your fangs must be cut!"

"You will find that I am not fooling with you."

"Accursed Yankee!" hissed the pirate, white with rage, as he dodged out of Dick's way. "You shall pay dearly for this!"

"Rather curse your own tribe," cried Dick. "It will take a Yankee boy to beat you. Ah! Here you are again!"

He sprang at the big, hulking fellow, and caught him by the throat.

A hoarse cry of rage and mortification burst from Santa Cruz's lips, and clutching Dick by the hair with his right hand, he shoved the boy's head back, and raising the blade in his left hand he aimed a terrific blow at Dick's head.

He designed to stab the boy to the brain!

Down shot the knife, and up went the boy's hand, the dagger he held being pointed upward, and as Santa Cruz's weapon descended, his arm violently struck the point of Dick's knife!

The dagger pierced his arm, and a yell escaped him.

He let his own weapon fall to the floor, staggered back and Dick drew his blade from the wound; the pirate reached the bulkhead, up against which he backed himself.

Dick still held him by the throat, and in his rage and pain Santa Cruz doubled up his wounded fist and raised it to deal Dick a blow, meantime yet holding the boy by the hair with his right hand and pressing Dick's head back.

The boy was at a disadvantage and saw the blow coming.

Again his knife flashed forward, struck Santa Cruz in the old wound, pierced it again, and, knocking his arm back against the woodwork, the knife became impaled.

Santa Cruz's arm was pinned to the bulkhead!

He uttered a terrible roar of pain and fury.

The pain he suffered was excruciating, and his smooth, dark face became distorted into a frightful expression, foam emanated from his thick lips and his eyes nearly burst.

He let go his hold on the boy, and Dick started back.

"I've fixed you for a target now!" cried the boy, as he snatched one of Santa Cruz's revolvers from his belt, cocked it and aimed it at the man, "and shall make you share the terrible fate you brought upon my father!"

"Mercy! Mercy!" groaned Santa Cruz, in horror. "Help! Save me!"

The boy stood about five paces from the rascal, and was aiming the pistol at him, Santa Cruz meantime frantically trying with his disengaged hand to tear the dagger out of the arm fastened to the bulkhead.

"Mercy?" scornfully echoed the boy. "Had you any on my father? None! Had you any on my brother? None! And I will have no mercy on you! Do you hear?"

"As you hope for divine salvation, don't fire!" groaned the writhing wretch, as a cold perspiration burst out of all the pores in his skin, and he shrank back against the wall in a frenzy of alarm.

Dick cast a glance of contempt upon the coward.

"Say your prayers, you murderer!" he exclaimed.

"No, no! I am not prepared to die!" howled Santa Cruz.

"I am going to fire these six shots at you in quick succession," proceeded Dick, unmoved. "One in each limb, another in your body, and the last in your brain!"

"Help, help!" yelled the terrified man.

He was unable to release his pinioned arm, as the slightest touch on the knife sent horrible pains through him.

"I am a dead shot!" said Dick. "Your men may kill me in a minute, but I don't care. I am reckless and desperate. I am willing to die for vengeance!"

There sounded the patter of footsteps out on deck, and the approach of many voices talking excitedly in Spanish.

"My men come!" gasped Santa Cruz.

"But too late!" cried Dick.

He took aim at the pirate's right arm.

As he did so a beautiful young girl sprang lightly out of one of the curtained bunks in back of Dick, a dagger in her hand, and ere the boy could fire at Santa Cruz she bounded forward, and struck up the pistol as Dick pulled the trigger, and the bullet was buried in the ceiling.

"Stop!" she cried, in English. "Stop, or I shall stab you!"

"Conchita! My daughter! Save me!" screamed Santa Cruz.

"A girl!" gasped Dick, wheeling around and facing her.

She was no more than fifteen years old, but finely developed, and attired in a black lace short dress, and a Spanish mantilla pinned to her coiled-up, raven-black hair.

The boy saw that she had wondrously beautiful features, a pair of big, dusky eyes, and had a determined look on her face.

"Stand back!" the girl exclaimed, sternly. "Would you kill my father?"

"Your father?" echoed Dick in surprise. "It cannot be possible!"

"Help, help!" shouted Santa Cruz, in Spanish again.

"Ah! I will be cheated out of my revenge!" gasped Dick.

"Lower your weapon!" exclaimed Conchita.

"No. I have sworn to kill that fiend!" said Dick, and just as the companionway door was burst open and a swarm of the pirates came rushing down the stairs, he aimed his weapon at Santa Cruz again, and fired.

A wild cry pealed from the pirate's lips.

"I am shot!" he raved, in awful tones of agony.

"Madman! Stop!" shrieked the girl.

She sprang at him with her stiletto upraised.

"One!" exclaimed Dick, darting aside.

He aimed again, at Santa Cruz's brain this time, as the other shot had pierced his right arm.

The boy was perfectly indifferent to his own fate if he could only succeed in killing the pirate captain.

One of the men, coming down the companionway, flung a missile at the boy, and knocked him over on the floor before he could fire.

The girl sprang upon him and raised her dagger over Dick's heart!

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE MAIN ROYAL RIGGING.

Dick imagined his last hour on earth had come, for the pirates had all come down in the cabin, and the gleaming knife held aloft by the handsome girl threatened to kill him.

"Conchita!" shouted Santa Cruz, furiously, "bury your dagger in his heart!"

"Fool!" muttered the girl. "How dared you brave him this way?"

Yet, though her words were discouraging, an admiring look for the brave boy shone in her fine eyes that fairly thrilled Dick.

"I have tried to do my duty and failed. Kill me now!" said the boy.

"You are brave—very brave!" she murmured.

And she lowered the dagger just as the ugly-looking crew, who had been summoned by Santa Cruz's cries, gathered around.

"Release me of this dagger!" roared the pirate captain, wildly.

One of the men did so, and Santa Cruz started toward Dick to take summary spite upon him, when the girl cried:

"No, father, no! Wait—remember your promise. You swore that no deeds of violence should be witnessed by me."

"Ay—you speak truly," was the hoarse reply of Santa Cruz, as he came to an abrupt pause, his breath stertorous, and his eyes flaming like live coals of fire. "Leave the cabin, then."

"No. Spare the boy until some other time."

"Ay," whispered Gonzalez to the captain. "In your sudden rage do not forget that he is more valuable to you alive than dead. Wait—cool off—imprison him."

"But look at how he has wounded me!" bellowed Santa Cruz.

"You can wreak a torture upon him for it."

"Ay—so I can. Remove him from here. The sight of him

maddens me as a red cape does the goaded beast at a bull-fight."

"Come—leave the cabin ere you are killed," whispered Conchita.

"Ah! You speak kindly to me," said Dick.

"Hush! Not so loud! I am more your friend than enemy.

What I just did was done for effect," whispered the girl, hurriedly.

"Bind him and confine him down in the run!" cried the captain.

The girl glanced significantly at the boy gunner.

He saw that for some reason she had befriended him.

What occasioned it Dick had no idea just then, but he was eventually to discover a strange secret regarding Conchita.

One of the men started toward Dick to seize him.

"If once they make a prisoner of me," thought the boy, as his glance fell upon the man, "I am doomed."

Through one of the portholes he had seen that they were off the Roman Keys, and a daring plan to escape from his enemies entered his mind.

"The distance is only a league, I imagine," he calculated, "and I can easily swim it, and may get away."

The resolution was formed at once.

As the man reached out his hand Dick saw that only this fellow intervened between himself and the companionway.

Suddenly stooping over, he darted between the man's spread legs, arose under him, causing the Spaniard to pitch forward, while he sprang ahead toward the stairs.

An angry shout arose from the men.

Conchita's eyes dilated with fear, and she murmured:

"Rash fellow! He invites his own death! Why did he not submit, and I would aid him to escape. I must leave these dreadful people myself, and could have gone with him."

Dick heard nothing of this monologue, for just then he was flying up the stairs at breakneck speed to reach the deck.

The pirates in the cabin all ran after him, the enraged Santa Cruz at their head, vowing to kill the boy at once.

The moment Dick reached the deck he shut the door of the companionway, but as it had no lock on the outside he could not fasten the men in as he hoped to do.

At least half the crew were on the deck, and as the boy rushed out, they caught sight of him, and made a rush to capture him.

Beset on all sides, the desperate boy saw no chance to reach either bulwark, and feared for an instant that he would be taken.

It was just as he was on the point of giving up, when his quick glance rested on a backstay, hanging loosely near him from the mainmast, and with an eager clutch he seized it, and went up hand over hand toward the cross-trees.

The boy was as agile as a monkey, and whisked himself up out of the reach of his enemies in a twinkling.

The stay hung from the top of the main topgallant yard, just above the topsail, and as soon as the boy reached the cross-trees he caught hold of the topgallant shrouds and hurried up to the royal.

Glancing down, he saw Santa Cruz come flying up the shrouds on the starboard side, armed with a huge revolver.

"The rascal looks dangerous," thought the boy. "What shall I do now? If I go up any further, I will reach the truck at the highest point of the rigging. This is dreadful!"

Having reached the maintop, Santa Cruz proceeded on, never pausing until he reached the topsail lifts.

Then he came to an abrupt pause.

Thinking he was coming still further, Dick went on up the royal topmast to the yard, upon which he climbed, and grasping the truck he glanced down at his enemy.

The dizzy height at which the boy was now perched would have made a landsman's head swim, for the sea was rolling and rocking the three-masted schooner beneath him, and his slender support hardly seemed capable of sustaining his weight—the wind nearly blew him off, and he could go no further.

The sun was declining over the island of Cuba, and a short distance off, lying along the hilly coast, he saw the key to which he had been in hopes of swimming to escape.

Santa Cruz had a diabolical look on his dark face, and making a gesture to the boy, he cried, angrily:

"You are at my mercy. Come down to the deck again."

"I won't. You have not got me yet, either!" replied Dick.

"Compadre! If you do not obey, I will shoot you down!"

"That will be small satisfaction to you!" retorted Dick.

Santa Cruz became more exasperated every moment, for the boy's cool indifference was more than he expected.

Down upon the deck was congregated his whole crew, to whom he had signified his intention of bringing the fugitive boy down; and all were looking up at them.

If he failed to make good his threat, they might laugh at him, and he would lose some of his prestige.

Dick saw what a towering passion he was in, and laughed outright at the man, increasing his rage tenfold by it.

With a malignant look upon his brow, the pirate aimed his revolver at the boy, and in husky tones he cried:

"You are stubborn; but I will bend you to my will."

"Never!" said Dick, defiantly. "You shall never conquer me."

"We shall see, por Dios, we shall see!"

"Fire, you demon! You can do no more than kill me!"

"Listen to me. I do not want to kill you, unless you compel me to do so. You can be of service to me, and for that reason I will offer you one chance for your life."

"Ah, you are changing your tune!"

"Will you hear me?"

"Name your proposition."

"I want you to join my crew."

Dick started, and was upon the point of answering, when suddenly an idea occurred to his mind.

"If I join him I may get an opportunity of making his life expiate the crime he committed against my dear ones," the boy cogitated. "I could abide my time and strike him when he is off his guard."

"Well, your answer?" impatiently exclaimed Santa Cruz.

"Shall I comply?" murmured the boy.

He hesitated an instant longer; then there came a sudden revulsion of feeling in his breast.

"Join the murderers—become one of their band!" he murmured. "Oh, no! Even to gain my point I could not do it—at least not while the memory of their fearful atrocities remain fresh in my mind!"

Santa Cruz cocked his revolver.

He gnashed his teeth, and taking aim he yelled:

"Your answer—quick! Comply, and your life will be spared; refuse, and, by heaven, you shall have to jump from that mast down to the sea, with a bullet in your head!"

A scornful look swept over Dick's pale face.

"I refuse!" he cried, sharply. "Death before dishonor!"

"Then jump!" yelled Santa Cruz ferociously.

Dick glanced down to the rolling sea and shuddered.

"A leap into the jaws of death!" he gasped.

"I will count three—then go! I will fire, anyhow!" cried the pirate.

The boy swung himself around on the cross-trees in readiness.

"One!" shouted Santa Cruz, in stern tones.

Dick began to pray, for he saw nothing but death ahead.

"Two!" came the voice of the cold-blooded Spaniard.

"Save me!" gasped the boy. "Father—brother, I come to you!"

"Three!" sounded the voice of Santa Cruz.

And with the last word he shot at Dick. The boy uttered a wild, piercing cry, leaped out toward the sea, and his body shot, like a cannon-ball, down through the air!

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE ROMAN KEY.

As Dick leaped from the top of the mainmast down into the sea from the Diablo, a cry pealed from the lips of the pirates standing upon the deck.

Conchita, the daughter of Santa Cruz, fainted, and the captain descended from the rigging to the deck, having thrust the revolver in his belt with which he shot at the brave boy.

"Death before dishonor, eh?" Santa Cruz muttered. "Well, he got it. His body struck the sea, and will descend many fathoms deep. I am satisfied. I avenged the stab in my arm and the shot he gave me. That expression haunts me. It was the motto of his father when we crucified him; it was the motto of his brother when we made him walk the plank; it was his own motto when he leaped into the sea. Had he joined my band he would have saved his life. But—no more of this. Now to pass Cayo Romano, reach Puerto Principe,

get my privateersman's commission of the King of Spain, and then to scourge the Antilles!"

The twilight settled slowly upon the scene, and the Diablo forged ahead through the waters, leaving the spot where Dick Griswold's body struck the water and disappeared.

The pirates were all so firmly convinced that the boy perished after his frightful leap that they did not trouble themselves any more about the matter, but busied themselves with their duties.

Indeed, it seemed as if the boy's fate was sealed.

The shot Santa Cruz fired had missed him, it is true, but the leap he took was so great that unless he was an accomplished diver he must have lost his life in the descent.

The boy struck the water headforemost; there came a stunning shock; his body was curved, and down in the depths he went.

His body passed through the brine like a shot, going down a ways and then curving off at an abrupt angle.

His senses did not desert him, for he had taken a deep breath, and he overcame a faint, stupid sensation that assailed him.

On, through and under the water went his body, but it kept curving upward, and reached the surface just as the power to hold his breath became exhausted.

Every nerve and muscle in his body tingled, and he was numb all over, let he found that he could swim very well, and struck out to the southward, a league in which direction he caught occasional views of the Roman Keys, when the waves lifted him up.

They were only long, narrow strips of sand and corral, with some scant vegetation, a few cocoa-palms and a fringe of white surf.

Dick swam well, and as his strength and courage returned, an exultant feeling of joy pervaded him to think how cleverly he managed to escape from his brutal enemies.

"They think I am dead," muttered he, as he easily swam along, and glanced back at the fast receding vessel. "I do not blame him, either. Such a jump! Oh, heaven! How is it I am alive and uninjured? I thought I'd break every bone in my body!"

The gathering twilight favored the boy by hiding him from the view of his enemies, but it filled him with dread lest it might obscure the sand bars from his view, and leave him helplessly floundering about in search of the shore.

With this idea in his mind, he resolutely turned his face toward the Keys, and the wind and tide aided him along.

It occupied fully an hour to reach the shore, but he finally did it, and wading up on the sand, he glanced around the place.

It was a desolate spot, and as he viewed his surroundings a chill pervaded him, and he muttered, gloomily:

"Alone—all alone. What is to become of me?"

A strange, eventful fate we are licensed to say, fraught with peril, filled with glory and teeming with narrow escapes.

As he glanced at the iron-bound coast of Cuba, slowly but surely melting away in the shadows of twilight, he saw a small boat with a lug sail dart out from the mainland toward him.

These clumsy but able little blue-painted boats are to be met with all around the Ever Faithful Isle, manned by the bronzed, dark-eyed Spaniard, who lazily toils along the shore for his living.

The boat upon which Dick fastened his gaze was very heavily burdened by several men, as he saw, and it came straight out toward the Key, heeling over as it beat against the wind.

"Strange that they should come here," muttered the boy in surprise. "There is no apparent reason for it. Can they be friends or foes? Will they carry me over to the main? To be assured, though, I will conceal myself behind yonder sand hill and watch them. It is best to be safe. In these revolutionary days a Cuban is the friend of the American—the Spaniard, on the contrary, hates us like poison."

He hurried away as he spoke, and hiding himself from observation he watched the little boat until it touched the shore of the Key and its inmates landed.

To Dick's amazement, he saw that three of the men were Spanish soldiers, another, the boatman, in red cap and linen pants, and the fifth an elderly man of fine appearance.

"What under heavens can this mean?" thought Dick amazed.

He had a good view of the Spanish volunteers, for the

big, full moon came up on the edge of the sea and the stars shone out.

"Antonio!" exclaimed one of the soldiers. "Have you the stake?"

"It is useless, senor," replied the boatman. "You can tie him fast to one of yonder palms and save driving a stake."

"True, por Dios, true! Now you, Robert Fairfax——"

"Spare me!" exclaimed the prisoner, in English.

"A Yankee, 'pon my word!" gasped Dick, with a start.

"No!" sternly said the soldier. "You will be tied fast and shot!"

"The American Consul will avenge this outrage!"

"Bah! He will never learn what became of you!"

"My innocent blood will cry for revenge——"

"And never get it, you accursed spy!"

"No, no! I am no spy."

"But we caught you at the farmer's house, spying upon us."

"Only from curiosity. I was on my way to Puerto Principe."

"And obstinately refused to tell your business when we asked it."

"Decidedly. My mission was a secret——"

"It must have been, since you had no passport."

"You have no authority to kill me!" said the American.

"Might is right! Besides, in resisting capture you shot one of us."

"Simply in self-defense. You all menaced my life."

"The Americans are enemies of the royalists."

"Because they admire the Cuban spirit of independence."

"Well, we will waste no more words. Come along!"

"Cowards! Release me! I will fight each of you single-handed."

"Oh, we have no time for nonsense! Forward, I say!"

The old gentleman was obstinate, however, and the three soldiers were forced to seize him and drag him over to the nearest palm.

There they flung their carbines upon the ground, and with ropes prepared for the purpose, they began to bind the man.

His felt hat was moved back from his pale face, and Dick saw that he wore a short, white beard, and had a noble-looking face, upon which was now depicted a melancholy look.

"This is vile butchery!" the boy gasped. "He is an American, and I would be unloyal to patriotism should I allow them to murder that brave man without striking a blow in his defense."

The backs of the three soldiers were turned toward Dick for an instant, and seeing that it offered him a good opportunity to appear, he suddenly emerged from behind the sand bank.

As he ran toward the soldiers the boatman saw him.

He uttered a warning cry, causing the men to glance around.

They were not quick enough for Dick, though.

At a bound the boy reached their carbines, snatched them up, and retreating to the top of the sand hill, he retained one of the weapons, raised it to his shoulder, aimed at the soldiers and cried:

"Release that man, or I will fire at you!"

The Spaniards were fairly stunned with amazement.

They stood gaping at the sudden apparition of the boy, with bulging eyes, and their prisoner, yet unsecured and now unguarded for an instant, rushed over toward Dick.

This movement caused the soldiers to recover themselves.

They started a few paces after their prisoner, but the sight of Dick threatening to shoot them brought them to a pause.

The next instant the old man reached Dick's side.

"Save me!" he exclaimed, wildly. "Save me!"

"Here—I will cut your bonds!" exclaimed Dick.

Holding the carbine pointed at the Spaniards with one hand, he drew out a pocket-knife, opened it with his teeth, and, severing the old gentleman's bonds, he exclaimed:

"Pick up one of those carbines and aid me."

"With all my heart! The tables are turned on them!" gasped the other as he complied. "May heaven bless you, brave boy!"

The Spaniards just then started toward the two, furiously. But Dick was ready for them.

CHAPTER VIII.

AWAY ON HORSEBACK.

"Halt!" cried Dick, resolutely. "If you advance another step, we will shoot you down like dogs! Do you hear?"

His clear, ringing voice caused the men to pause, and from their belts they drew their huge navy revolvers, meantime all three speaking excitedly in Spanish about the daring boy.

"Traitor!" hissed the leading soldier. "You will die for this!"

"Bah! I am an American!—a Yankee boy, through and through! And one Yankee boy is good for a dozen of your nation!"

The Spaniard's dark eyes flashed fire, and they vented imprecations upon Dick that fairly made his blood boil in his veins. His taunt was more than their hot natures could stand.

At a word of command from the leader they raised their pistols, but before they could fire at Dick and the stranger, the boy cried:

"Let them have it!"

Bang! bang! went the two carbines together.

"Oh, Ave Maria!" yelled the leader, falling.

"I am shot!" howled another, reeling back.

"Help! Help!" shrieked the third, running toward the boat.

"After that fellow, stranger!" exclaimed Dick.

"What would you do?" demanded the old man.

"Escape to the mainland in that boat."

"Good! We can leave them all here. Come on!"

They rushed after the flying soldier, and left two of their enemies lying wounded upon the sand of the Key.

The soldier ran fleetly, reached the boat, scrambled in, and the boatman was just poling the little craft away from the shore when Dick and his companion dashed into the water, hastily waded out and seized a gunwale.

"Stop!" cried the boy. "Surrender this boat or——"

"Caramba! Beat them off, Antonio!" shouted the soldier.

"Ay—assist me! Compadre—what tigers! Oh!"

The boatman raised his oar to deal Dick a blow on the head, when the old man struck the Galician with the stock of his carbine and knocked him into the water.

The two then scrambled into the boat, and falling upon the cowardly soldier they stripped him of his weapons and ammunition.

"For heaven's sake do not kill me!" he whined in terror.

"We will, unless you answer us truthfully," said Mr. Fairfax.

"Yes—yes! Anything you please—what is it?"

"Are there any more soldiers at the farmhouse?"

"Only the one you wounded."

"Are you three friends of Herando Santa Cruz?"

"We are members of his band."

"He will be at Puerto Principe to-morrow?"

"Yes. He is there to receive a privateer's commission."

"Where can I find him there?"

"He will be at the residence of the Marquis de Robeldo, who has a sugar plantation outside of the town."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Nothing, senor; I swear it. I never met him in my life."

"Then go! See—your friends are sitting up, and the boatman has reached dry land. If you wish to live, swim ashore."

The Spanish soldier needed no second bidding.

With a muttered word of thanks, and a dark scowl upon his face, he sprang overboard, and swam ashore, as the boat had been blown out into deep water.

Dick spread the lug sail, grasped the tiller, and the blue boat started over toward the mainland again, the four men left on the Key raving and swearing furiously over their plight.

When they were at a safe distance from shore Dick keenly surveyed the stranger from head to foot, and then, satisfied with his scrutiny he said, in abrupt tones:

"Mr. Fairfax, how came you to get in this trouble?"

The old gentleman smiled in a sad manner, and replied:

"Through my foolish eagerness to learn too much at a jump."

"I do not understand your allusion, sir."

"Nor would you, unless I tell you my history."

Then they questioned each other, Dick explaining all that befell him, and in conclusion saying:

"I heard you ask about Santa Cruz, and taking that fact in connection with your being on a secret mission to Puerto Principe, I presume that you know the scoundrel, and want to see him for some reason. Am I right?"

"You are right. I want to kill him!"

"Kill him?" echoed Dick.

"There—there! I am mystifying you again. The only thing I can do is to explain myself clearly. It is all summed up briefly. Yars ago I began business in Spain, and married a girl whom Santa Cruz loved. He swore vengeance. After my daughter was born, an assassin killed my wife and stole my child. The evidence showed me that Santa Cruz was the guilty party, and I began to search for him to recover my child, and avenge my wife's death. Ten years of wandering from place to place, followed, fruitlessly, sometimes the rascal being almost within my grasp, when by some fatal luck he managed to escape. Gaining tidings of his being seen in Havana, I went there, but soon learned that he had given me the slip. Intelligence reached me that he was suspected of piracy on a vessel called the *Diablo*, which he sailed. No one could prove it, though. He has influential friends with the royalist party in power here, and I discovered that they secured him a privateer's commission, to be given at Puerto Principe. Thither I was going on horseback to meet him, when my horse ran away and flung me to the ground.

"A nearby farmhouse attracted my attention. But when I glanced in I saw the soldiers who captured me. Suspecting me of being a spy, they attacked me. A detachment of Cuban rebels appearing, they carried me off to the sand bar to kill me."

"Then it was a merciful Providence that cast me ashore there just in time to save your life," said Dick.

"Very; and I am truly grateful."

"What was your daughter's name?"

"Conchita. She was named after her mother."

"Ha! Then I have seen her!" said Dick.

"What!" cried Robert Fairfax, with a start. "You have seen her?"

"She is the girl on the *Diablo*, whom I mentioned as the pirate's daughter, sir. Listen, I will describe her to you."

The boy thereupon gave a vivid, verbal picture of the girl.

Before he was through the old gentleman burst out with:

"The likeness is perfect—the marks you describe identical; and the girl is exactly what my daughter should be."

"Then we may recover her at Puerto Principe."

"You say 'we.' Are you going there, too?"

"If God spares me, I will prevent you killing Santa Cruz."

"Ha! You are no friend, but an enemy of mine."

"Enemy? No! I am your best friend."

"Why, then, would you save Hernando Santa Cruz's life?"

"Save it? No! But I shall kill him myself!"

The two avengers, thus strangely met and acquainted, glanced at each other an instant and shook hands.

Their mission was the same, both having kindred objects, save that Robert Fairfax wanted to rescue his child from the power of their common enemy, if he could.

The boat soon reached the shore, they landed, tied it fast, and as they walked up the road, Mr. Fairfax said:

"The soldiers whom we just fought were mounted. There is a stable attached to the farmhouse wherein we will find their horses. We can each take one. Our road will then be easy to travel."

They proceeded toward the house, carrying the carbines and the ammunition, which they divided, after loading their weapons.

To their dismay they found the house in full possession of a troop of Spanish cavalry, the men inside, some on the balcony, and their horses tethered outside of the thatched farmhouse.

For over an hour the two lay behind some cactus bushes, watching for an opportunity to steal two of the horses, when Dick suddenly descried the boatman hurrying toward the house.

"Mr. Fairfax," he muttered, "see—here comes the boatman. The wretch has evidently swam from the sand bar to the main."

"And will put those soldiers on the alert for us!"

"Then one bold dash alone will save us from capture!"

"What do you propose?"

"We must secure two of those horses at any hazard."

"I am desperate, my boy, and ready for anything."

"Then follow me without delay."

With the utmost effrontery the two strode out from behind the cactus, and walked over toward the house, the soldiers catching sight of them at once, and watching them curiously.

The boatman saw them, too, uttered a warning shout, and began to run toward them in the utmost excitement.

The moment they got close to the horses they each suddenly seized one apiece, within a few feet of the amazed troopers, vaulted into the saddles, and dashed out on the road.

As soon as the astonished soldiers recovered their wits over this daring procedure, the boatman reached them.

He rapidly apprised them of who the two were, and uttering shouts of rage the soldiers ran to the remaining animals, loosened and mounted them, and sped furiously away in pursuit of the fugitives.

CHAPTER IX.

OVER A CLIFF.

Both Dick and his companion were good riders, and the horses they bestrode were two of the best in the lot they selected from.

With amazing speed they dashed along the chalky road, hotly pursued by the Spanish troopers, the horses' hoofs pounding the ground like the continuous rattling of artillery.

"If we fail to distance and escape them," said Dick, "our lives will pay the forfeit. On—faster—faster—faster!"

"We will hold our lead, if we do not gain!" gasped Mr. Fairfax.

The boy gunner glanced back over his shoulder.

"They are preparing to fire at us!" he muttered.

"Heaven help us, then!" said Fairfax, overhearing this remark.

The next instant the soldiers fired a volley.

The bullets flew around them like rain, but close as they came not one of them, by good luck, hit the two fugitives.

"Another volley like that," muttered Dick, "and if we do not fall, our horses may get shot from under us."

"We can only trust to luck," said Mr. Fairfax, resignedly.

On, on, on with the speed of the wind dashed the flying pair, through the tropical country with its peculiar vegetation, lashing their horses with the bridles, and goading them to the top of their speed by ever available artifice.

One of the troopers began to rapidly gain on them, presently.

Dick noticed it, and turning in the saddle, he let go the reins, brought his carbine to his shoulder, aimed and fired.

A moment after the sharp, spiteful crack of the weapon rang out, the gaining horse came to a sudden pause that flung its rider in the road over its head, and then up it went on its haunches, pawing the air, a wild neigh escaping it, and when it came down it fell lifeless.

One of the other horses behind it struck the carcass, and went plunging to earth with its rider a little beyond.

There were at least a dozen in pursuit, though, and as the others cleared the fallen troopers and came rushing on the fugitives saw that their danger was not lessened.

"I thought that shot would save us, but it didn't," said Dick.

"And there is danger ahead of us!" cried Fairfax.

"Danger—what do you mean?"

"Can't you see the cliffs we are approaching?"

"True. They edge that river. What shall we do?"

"There is no escape. We can't go to the right or left."

"Then we will go over the cliff!" cried Dick, excitedly.

"But that means certain death!"

"We have no choice of risks, Mr. Fairfax."

An exultant shout pealed up from their pursuers, who knew just what a trap the two were plunging into.

They were flying through a precipitous gorge at the end of which was a cliff, fully fifty feet high, over which they were bound to rush, if they kept straight on.

There had been a strong bridge spanning it, but it had been destroyed by some retreating insurgents a week before, to cut off the pursuit of their Spanish foes.

The yells of the Spaniards made the fugitives' blood run cold.

"They mean to drive us over the cliff, anyhow!" said Dick.

"Fire at them—we may save ourselves!" said Fairfax.

"Good! Ready—aim at their horses."

Bang! bang! went the two carbines, and two horses fell. Rapidly they loaded and fired again.

Two more animals went down, throwing their riders.

Meantime the horses were racing on at the top of their speed, and the Spaniards, not at all intimidated, but rather more enraged, kept pressing on in pursuit, ferociously.

All the bad blood in their veins was aroused.

"If we keep on at this rate," muttered Dick, "we will get rid of the whole crowd. How determined they are. Here goes another shot!"

But just as he was on the point of firing, a warning cry came from Mr. Fairfax, and the boy heard a terrific clattering of the earth beneath the horses' hoofs.

He just had time to glance around, when to his horror he saw his own horse and that of his companion leap from the top of the cliff, far out over the muddy river.

A volley from the Spaniards peeled out at the same juncture.

Then both horses went flying through the air.

This was Dick's second aerial leap for life.

A shudder convulsed the boy as he went shooting down through the air from the top of the cliff, astride of his horse.

Down, down, with the rapidity of a cannon-ball, hurtled horses and riders, and, striking the river with a splash and vast upheaval of water, they sank out of sight.

The mounted soldiers arrived at the crest of the cliff the next instant and glanced down in an effort to see them.

The moment Dick's horse struck the water he flung himself from the saddle and broke the force of the shock.

What Mr. Fairfax did Dick could not see.

His body sank and came up again to the surface, where he floated, gasping for breath, and feeling at every moment as if he must give up and perish.

He gradually recovered himself, and when his faculties were all returned he glanced around and saw the carcass of his horse floating in the water, not far off, the fall having killed it.

To his joy he next beheld Mr. Fairfax.

The old gentleman was clinging to the saddle of his own horse, from which he had been dismounted, and the shocked, but otherwise uninjured beast was swimming for the other shore.

"Dick! Dick! Are you safe—are you alive?" cried Fairfax.

"Ay, alive and uninjured, but my horse is dead."

"Swim over here. We will get across the water all right."

"Look out for the Spaniards. They are watching us!" said Dick, warningly, and he swam over to the horse.

The salvation of the fugitives, from what looked like almost certain death, filled the troopers with wild amazement.

Dick reached the snorting horse before they recovered their wits.

Both he and Mr. Fairfax lost their carbines in the fall.

Grasping the saddle, beside the old gentleman, the boy and his friend were carried across the river by the beast.

The shore on the other side was as precipitous as the one they had just left, which caused them a good deal of uneasiness.

How they were to reach the tableland above they did not know. It was just as they reached shallow water and waded, that the Spanish troopers saw their predicament, and began firing at them.

"We are in a bad fix now!" Dick exclaimed.

"A regular trap!" assented Mr. Fairfax.

"Pretty soon a bullet may hit and kill us."

"And there is no protection here."

The narrow strip of rugged beach stretched many miles inland, and seemed to run out to the sea, about a mile to the northeast.

"To remain here is certain death!" said Dick, glancing around.

"Then let us follow the shore inland. We may find a means to ascend to the upper ground and get out of our trouble."

A rattle of bullets from the Spaniards against the base of the cliff warned them that death menaced them dangerously close.

They put the body of the horse between themselves and the Spaniards, and started to go along the shore, when another volley came.

Several of the bullets hit the horse and killed it.

Down fell the poor beast upon the narrow shore.

The situation of the two fugitives had become desperate in the extreme.

"Down! Down, for your life!" exclaimed Dick. "Get behind the carcass of the beast. It's our only salvation."

"Heaven aid us! You are right!" cried Fairfax in alarm.

The sharpshooters on the cliff across the water had ensconced themselves in positions of advantage to pick off the two, but when they crouched behind the body of the dead horse their lives were out of danger for at least a while, at all events.

How long this was to last, though, they had no means of knowing.

Shot after shot was vainly fired at them from their determined enemies, and the hours passed slowly and wearily away.

The dawning of another day began to show itself in the eastern skies, and the two fugitives heard the Spaniards shouting over the river in excited tones, as if addressing Dick or Fairfax.

"What can they be saying?" asked the boy.

"I cannot distinguish a single word."

"They—ah! What is this? Pebbles—falling—from above!"

"And look up—heavens! This is dreadful!"

Fairfax pointed upward, and as Dick turned his glance to the top of the cliff he was horrified to see more of the Spaniards peering down at them from above—directly over their heads.

A moment later they found a new danger menacing them.

The men over their heads began to heave great rocks down toward them in the hope of pelting them to death!

As they saw the rocks coming they both arose from behind the sheltering body of the horse, in utmost consternation.

"Run!" cried Dick. "They will crush us to death. Rather risk the bullets from yonder rascals' rifles than to remain here to be killed like a rat in a trap. Ah—they fire now!"

And just as they rushed off, the rocks came crashing down, while a volley was fired at them from across the river!

CHAPTER X.

A BREAK FOR FREEDOM.

Gunboat Dick had been in many perils, but none to equal that in which he now found himself with Robert Fairfax.

The rocks hurled down from the top of the cliffs over their heads nearly struck them, while the bullets that came over the river from the rifles of the Spanish troopers struck the cliff like hailstones.

In the light of the dawning day they were forced to abandon their shelter behind the body of the horse, and seek safety in flight along the narrow strip of shore exposed to their enemies' fire.

It seemed as if they would never reach Puerto Principe alive to save Conchita from Hernando Santa Cruz, and wreak their just vengeance upon the cruel monster who had done them both so much injury.

Should the rascal secure the privateer commission from the King of Spain he would sail away, and they might never capture him.

The two sped a hundred yards along the shore; then Mr. Fairfax paused.

"Hold on!" he gasped. "Here is a retreat of safety."

"Ah!" cried Dick. "A cavern in the face of the cliff!"

"The Spaniards across the river cannot leave the gorge to follow us alongshore and fire at us!" said Mr. Fairfax, exultantly.

"Nor can the rocks coming down from above hit us," said Dick.

They sprang toward the opening in the cliff just as more of the rocks descended, and another volley was fired over the river.

"We are all right so far," muttered Dick, breathing a sigh of intense relief, once they were within the cavern. "But where are we?"

"This is but the ending of a fissure," said Fairfax; "see, off in back there!"

The cavern was small, and the dim glow of day piercing the gloom in back showed Dick a wide crevice, up through which they could go to the tableland above.

He hardly had time to notice it, though, when he saw the distant outlines of a dozen Spanish soldiers at the extremity, all of whom were coming down toward the cavern!

"See!" he exclaimed. "They may discover us, and then our lives would not be worth a cent!"

"If we only had passports!" muttered Mr. Fairfax.

"This uniform of mine," said Dick, "is a passport for me—to certain death. The Spaniards hate our nation."

"Let us hide somewhere, my boy; we may elude them."

"There is no place, unless we lie on the ground behind these rocks. But, quick—come—it is our only chance."

They hurried over to a tumbled mass of chalk rock, and barely had time to crouch down behind them, when the soldiers came clambering through the inclined plane or fissure, and entered the cavern.

They all came to a pause within a few feet of the two fugitives, and Dick's heart beat fast and furious, for the least sound would be sure to betray them.

The soldiers peered sharply around, and the leader cried, in Spanish:

"Ave Maria! We are in a natural cavern, friends."

"But I see no signs of them in here," said one of the men.

"They must yet be out on the shore, somewhere."

"And our compatriots across the river said they were spies."

"Yes—Yankee spies at that!"

"Down with them then—eh, boys!"

A hoarse murmur of assent from the men was given, and they rushed past the concealed fugitives to the entrance.

"It is death to fall in their power!" thought Dick.

Mr. Fairfax shuddered, and nudged the boy as he saw one of the soldiers remain behind the others at the entrance to the cavern on guard, while the rest passed out.

"We cannot emerge without discovery!" he whispered.

"Hush! Make no noise!" muttered the boy, warningly.

"An avenue of escape is open. They will soon discover our whereabouts. Ere then we must be far away."

Dick was in a desperate frame of mind just then.

He cautiously moved out from behind the rocks, and heedless of the dismayed looks upon the face of his companion he glided toward the soldier, behind his back.

The boy was weaponless, but full of pluck.

"I'll catch him behind his back!" he calculated, "and once I get a grip on his wind-pipe, we will escape."

Just as he reached the soldier, the man instinctively turned around, caught sight of him, and was upon the point of raising his carbine, and saying something, when the active boy sprang forward and grasped him by the throat.

Mr. Fairfax rushed over to assist the boy.

A cry which arose to the Spaniard's lips was choked back, ending in an inarticulate sound, and Mr. Fairfax, catching him by the shoulders, jerked him over on the ground.

He struck his head and became unconscious.

All further trouble was thus spared them, and they hastily appropriated his carbine, revolver and ammunition.

Then they ran over to the fissure in the rocks.

The voices of the soldiers out on the beach reached them.

"They have entered the cavern!" cried one, emphatically.

"Ay," added another. "See here. There's footprints in the ground."

"And they point a trail to the cavern mouth!" said another.

"Then they must be hiding inside!" continued the fourth.

"They are coming!" whispered Dick. "Fly! Fly!"

"Go ahead!" panted Fairfax, his face beneath the short, white beard growing pale, but determined. "I'll follow."

Just as they entered the fissure the soldiers came rushing into the cavern from the beach, excitedly.

They stumbled over the body of the senseless sentry, and the truth then rapidly dawned upon their minds.

The cries of the enraged soldiers warned the two fugitives to fly for their lives, and they rushed, stumblingly through the fissure when their enemies caught sight of them, and with many fierce cries and imprecations ran after the two.

"Fire at them!" cried Dick, when they were half way up to the top. "Check them a moment or we are lost."

"I am ready with the carbine!" panted Mr. Fairfax.

Dick had the navy revolver, and as they both came to an abrupt pause and discharged their weapons, it brought their enemies to a stop and they continued on again.

A few moments later they reached the upper ground, and Dick turned to his companion with the remark:

"Follow me the way they came from——"

"But there may be more of their number in that direction."

"We must run the risk——"

"No! Why should we. It is sheer madness——"

"They may have horses. It is our only chance to get away."

"True! I never thought of that. Go on, my boy!"

"And off they ran along the edge of the cliff toward a cluster of trees and shrubbery opposite the gorge where the troopers had come to a pause, and the Spaniards in pursuit of them came rushing out of the fissure which they had just evacuated.

The troopers across the river soon saw them flying for their lives, and uttering shouts of warning to the pursuers, they began firing at the flying pair.

The humming bullets sent Dick and Mr. Fairfax in amid the shrubbery, but they lost nothing by it, as they thus escaped the bullets of their vicious enemies, and at the same time entered the midst of the trees close upon a dozen fine-saddled horses, all of which were tethered.

"Saved!" gasped Dick. "Pick one out, Mr. Fairfax, and cut the rest loose so they can't pursue us!"

They had no more than time enough to do this, when their enemies drew close upon them.

Right and left the horses were scattered, and away they went, plunging in all directions, goaded by the stinging blows of saplings which Dick and his friend rained on their hides.

Two of the best-looking beasts were kept, and the fugitives sprang into the saddles as soon as they drove away the rest.

The next instant they dashed off like lightning.

A few parting, useless shots were fired after them by the exasperated and enraged Spaniards, and as they reached a clear road running from the broken bridge, they sped off in safety on their way to Puerto Principe.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ACCUSATION.

The scene was the sugar plantation of the Marquis of Robledo, an extensive field not unlike a mighty growth of cornstalks, while near the road that ran into Puerto Principe stood a one-storied clay house surrounded by a large veranda, on which opened the huge, iron-barred windows.

Beyond, in the gay lay several vessels at anchor in the moonbeams, while the scattered town gleamed with lights.

Two horsemen—Dick and Robert Fairfax—came cantering toward the house, when a villager passed by.

"Stranger!" exclaimed the boy, reining in and accosting him.

"Senor," replied the man, halting.

"Pray tell me where the Marquis de Robledo lives."

"Why, you do not know this place, then——"

"We are strangers here."

"Then yonder house is his."

"Gracious! So near! Many thanks."

"God be with you!" said the man, as he walked on.

"Dick, we might have been discovered!" said Fairfax.

"Let us dismount amid this cane-brake, sir," replied the boy.

Accordingly they drove their horses in among the stalks, where they were effectually concealed from view, dismounted and consulted.

"What plan have you, Dick?" asked the old man.

"You can remain here guarding the horses, and I will go on to the house to reconnoitre the ground. Should I not return, you will know I met with trouble, and can follow me. I may have to fly. Be sure, then, to have the horses in readiness for mounting and speed away, my good friend."

Mr. Fairfax wanted to go with him.

This was finally deemed useless.

So the boy stole away alone through the sugarcane.

He was armed with the revolver, was cautious in the extreme, and knew that his errand was very dangerous.

Within a few minutes he came to a clearing around the house and saw that the place was aglow with lights.

A savage growl close at his side caused him to start back, when he saw a monstrous, liver-colored bloodhound rushing toward him from the direction of the houses in which dwelt the negroes who labored on the plantation—a mere row of wretched hovels, all of which were tenanted by men, women and children.

Dick dared not discharge his revolver at the beast, for it would put his enemies on their guard and ruin his plans.

The beast was a formidable-looking antagonist to encounter without a weapon, too, but Dick did not flinch.

"I only hope he will not bark!" thought the boy.

He crouched back, bracing himself for the shock, and, with a savage growl, the beast sprang at his throat.

The quick glance of the boy was fixed on the hound.

It struck him square on the bosom, and both fell down.

The boy's hand seized the beast by the throat, and despite its wild, frantic struggles to break away he held on like grim death.

Dick realized that once the hound managed to get free his life might pay for it, so he nerved himself up to the pitch of all his strength, and fought to retain his hold.

Over and over on the ground rolled the struggling boy and beast, Dick making every effort to strangle his foe, and the hound hoarsely growling, snarling, snapping its great white teeth, and its long, red tongue lolling out.

So determined and furious was Dick's clutch, though, that the hound's struggles momentarily grew weaker and weaker until at last, with starting eyes and contorted face, it lay beneath the boy a lifeless mass.

The fight had been short, sharp and decisive.

Dick arose to his feet covered with dust, panting for breath, his clothing torn, and his flesh scratched and bleeding.

"A hard-won victory," he muttered. "I hope there are no more like this monster. I might fare worse."

He glanced over at the house, and had a view of the interior through a large, open window on the south side.

Within the room sat two men and a girl.

One of the men—old, patrician and attired in a semi-military suit—was probably the Marquis of Robledo.

The other was Hernando Santa Cruz.

And the girl was Conchita.

"Luck favors me!" the boy muttered joyfully. "The Diablo must be yonder large schooner riding at anchor. At all events, its vile commander is here, and Robert Fairfax's child can be wrested from his power. I will go in."

He fixed upon a very dangerous plan.

The boy was resolved to end the matter, though, with little delay as possible.

He glided across the clearing to the main entrance, but to his disgust he found a hall porter sitting just within the door at a little stand, making cigarettes, as most all Cuban porters do.

"Good-evening, senor," said he. "What do you wish?"

"I have business with the marquis," replied Dick, in Spanish.

"You will have to wait; he is engaged at present."

"But my business admits of no delay. It is as much with his two callers—the man and girl—as with the marquis."

"Ah! Then you may go in. I will announce you—"

"No! Stay!" said Dick, restraining the man as he arose.

"I prefer to enter without being announced. I wish to surprise them. It is a trifling matter of business, that is all."

The porter glanced suspiciously at Dick, but seeing that he was only a boy, the man's fears were allayed.

"Enter," said he, with a nod, after a pause.

The boy did so, and the porter closed and bolted the massive door.

It made Dick shudder, for the echoing clang seemed much like what the door of a prison would make, closing on a convict.

Before him stretched a broad, marble-floored hall, which ran straight through the house into the square courtyard in the center, through a door opening on to which Dick saw many flowers and shrubs, bathed in the moonlight.

They exuded a balmy and sweet fragrance, were picturesque in extreme, and half hid the tiled rooms running around the square.

The boy had the parlor located in his mind, on the south side, and passing out into the beautiful garden, he crossed the courtyard to the room containing those he sought.

Each of the apartments were furnished with a tremendous window, covered with great iron bars, running from roof to ground, and entirely open to admit the cool night breeze.

A light in the room showed Dick the trio.

They were all engaged in an earnest conversation.

The boy crouched amid the shrubs and peered in at them, every word they said reaching his ears distinctly.

"Your orderly, senor," the pirate was saying, "ought to be here from town very soon with the papers for me, I imagine."

"Will you set sail at once?" asked the marquis.

"Yes, indeed. I am bound for Santo Domingo."

"But can I not remain in Cuba?" asked Conchita.

"No, you must accompany me."

"There have been evil rumors circulated about you," said the marquis, lighting a cigarette. "Very ugly rumors, Santa Cruz."

"Of piracy? All nonsense, senor," said Santa Cruz scornfully.

He darted a warning glance at Conchita, and the marquis replied:

"To be sure. One's enemies are bound to malign our characters."

"Certainly, marquis. Were I a pirate the king would have learned the truth and never would have granted my commission."

"True—too true, Santa Cruz."

"He is a pirate! I can prove it, too!"

It was Dick who spoke from the doorway, where he stood. Santa Cruz uttered a cry of terror, bounded to his feet, and then recoiled, only to find Dick's revolver pointed at his head.

The marquis was startled, and arose in affright, while Conchita drew aside by one of the windows, exclaiming:

"'Tis the brave American boy!"

"God help us, what means this?" cried Robledo.

"It means that the King of Spain is granting license to a pirate to carry on his nefarious calling under protection of a privateersman's commission!" exclaimed Dick.

"Liar!" yelled Santa Cruz, in a fury, and his hand leaped to his belt, withdrew one of his revolvers and he aimed it at Dick, with a threat to blow the boy's brains out.

Just then the orderly ran into the room with the commission.

CHAPTER XII.

A BRAVE GIRL.

At a word of command from the marquis the orderly came to a pause at the door, in back of Dick, to guard it.

The boy and the pirate faced one another with their pistols, when the marquis, fearing fatal results, cried commandingly:

"Hold! Do not fire, I demand of both of you!"

"The boy is an infamous liar!" hoarsely cried Santa Cruz.

"No," said Dick; "I can prove my assertion."

"Do so!" exclaimed the marquis sternly.

"Ask that girl; she knows!" said Dick, lowering his weapon.

"What! His daughter? Have his own flesh and blood condemn him?"

"She is not his child!" cried Dick thrillingly.

"Not his daughter!" screamed the girl, starting forward.

"No. Your name is Fairfax. Your father was his successful rival. He murdered your mother and abducted you in your infancy to avenge himself. Your father is seeking you now."

Santa Cruz's face turned deathly; he started as if stricken a blow, recoiled, gasping for breath, and his big, black eyes glared.

He was amazed and started at Dick's exposure of his crime, as he had no idea where the boy got his information.

"Caramba!" he hissed. "This is too much!"

"Watch his guilty looks," said Dick. "Look at him!"

"By heavens, he has not the air of innocence!" the old marquis exclaimed, with a thrill of horror.

"Can this be true? I always imagined he was not my own father," said Conchita, in frantic tones.

"I swear it!" exclaimed Dick.

"There is truth in your voice—I believe you!" she cried.

"Retain his commission," cried Dick; "you will learn the truth, marquis. Speak, Conchita—speak!"

"Not a word!" roared Santa Cruz, holding up his hand.

The girl was silent.

There was a struggle going on in her mind between what might have been filial duty and her belief in Dick's accusation.

The old marquis glanced from Conchita to Santa Cruz.

"You restrain the girl from speaking!" he said suspiciously.

"Not at all, senor," responded the pirate chillingly. "Answer the scoundrel, my child. Do not be afraid. Save your injured father from his rascally design."

But as he so sweetly said this he turned a side glance at the girl so full of devilish threat, and touched the hilt of his dagger in such a dreadfully significant manner that, although no one else saw what he did, the girl was so horror-stricken her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

An exultant grin crossed his smooth, dark face.

He saw that he inspired the girl with horror unutterable.

"Why don't you prove what I say?" exclaimed Dick.

The girl raised her hand, glanced imploringly at the boy for an instant, saw that the marquis was keenly eyeing her, and shaking her head negatively, her hand fell to her side.

"The boy speaks falsely!" she gasped.

Dick started as if stricken a blow in the face.

"Great heaven! How dare you say that?" he cried bitterly.

"You see how foully he lies!" sneeringly said Santa Cruz, turning to the marquis and flourishing his hand.

"No, no, no!" cried Dick. "Search the hold of his vessel. You will there find plenty proof of his guilt. The Diablo is loaded with plunder. Mark my words!"

"I do not believe you!" exclaimed the marquis.

"Then you will reap the harvest of your folly."

"Orderly!" exclaimed the marquis.

"Senor," replied the soldier.

"Summon the guards!"

"But this paper, senor?"

"The commission? Hand it to me."

The soldier did so, Santa Cruz eyeing it eagerly, and with a military salute, he turned and stalked from the room.

"I am in a tight fix now!" muttered Dick.

"Senor Santa Cruz," exclaimed the marquis

"At your service, sir."

"Here is your commission."

"May heaven bless you, senor!"

"Take it. Then make a prisoner of this audacious boy."

He held out the paper, and, as Santa Cruz was upon the point of taking it from his extended hand, Dick sprang between them, snatched it away, recoiled, and tearing it to pieces, he flung the fragments upon the floor, and cried:

"Thus do I blast his fond hopes and baffle his villainy!"

The cry of a maddened beast pealed from the lips of Santa Cruz, and his face turned purple to the roots of his dark hair.

"May the arch fiend confound you!" he hissed.

"I would dishonor my virtue to permit this fraud!" cried Dick. "And now will I settle my account with you!"

And so saying, he raised his revolver again.

"Shoot him down!" cried Santa Cruz, in affright.

"Murder!" gasped the marquis, retreating in dismay.

"You killed my father and brother!" cried Dick. "My vengeance is at hand. Thus perish all cutthroats of your stamp!"

Bang! went his pistol, aimed straight at his enemy's heart.

A laugh pealed from the lips of Santa Cruz, fraught with derision.

"Fool!" he cried. "I am invulnerable!"

"Strange; I did not miss him!" muttered Dick.

He aimed and fired point blank at the pirate again.

Once more Santa Cruz laughed at him.

"You cannot kill me!" he cried. "But I will kill you!"

His arm went up, and his weapon was brought to bear upon Dick, when his vest opened in front.

Dick then saw that he wore a shirt of steel chain mail underneath—a protection which no bullet could penetrate.

The way he stood the two shots was then apparent.

Before he could fire at Dick, however, the boy aimed his revolver at the rascal's weapon, and so precisely was the shot fired, when he pulled the trigger, the bullet hit Santa Cruz's pistol and knocked it spinning from his hand.

He was left defenseless, save for his dagger.

For an instant he acted as if stunned.

Then he fell upon his knees, clasped his hands and yelled:

"Ave Maria! have mercy on a helpless man!"

"Not at all. Your doom is sealed. Say your prayers!" the

boy cried excitedly, as he aimed at the head of the cowering and trembling wretch. "Prepare to die!"

"Help! help! help!" screamed the marquis, and he started toward the door, while the pale-faced Conchita ran over to an open staircase leading up to the roof of the house, and ascended toward the top.

There came the hurried patter of many footsteps rushing through the yard, and before Dick could shoot down Santa Cruz, who was praying like a beggar for his life, into the room filed half a dozen Spanish soldiers behind the orderly, who had just summoned them.

Dick glanced around in dismay.

"Lost!" he muttered bitterly.

"Shoot him down!" shouted Robledo excitedly.

The soldiers raised their carbines and covered Dick.

"Revenge before I die!" cried the frantic boy.

He turned again to shoot down Santa Cruz, when to his chagrin he saw that the wily wretch had arisen, fled, and was crouching behind a huge, upright piano across the room.

"Fly!" screamed Conchita to Dick at this juncture.

"The girl!" he muttered, with a thrill of delight.

"Follow me—this way!" she continued.

Across the room fled the boy, and he reached the stairs in a flash, bounded up beside her, and gasped:

"God bless you! Run, or their bullets may hit you!"

"No. I do not fear death. I will have you!"

"Fire at him!" roared Santa Cruz, emerging from behind the piano, where he had taken refuge. "Fire, I say!"

"Hold!" screamed the girl, raising her hand. "Shoot at him, and you will kill me!"

And she put her body before that of Dick's.

The soldiers hesitated, the marquis turned pale, and a tigerish expression stole over Santa Cruz's face.

"Kill her!" he yelled. "I care not! Kill both of them!"

"Then shoot!" passionately cried the brave girl. "I defy you! I am but a poor, defenseless girl, but God will defend the just. Death, prefer I, like this brave Yankee boy, before dishonor!"

The soldiers still hesitated—abashed—unable to fire.

A hoarse cry pealed from Santa Cruz's thick lips, and he tore his dagger from his belt, rushed toward the staircase, and bounding up the steps, he cried frantically:

"Then caramba, if they fail to obey, I will kill you myself!"

The boy and girl saw him coming, and dashing up the stairs they rushed out on the roof of the building, while the marquis and the soldiers started after them.

CHAPTER XIII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

The moment Dick and Conchita dashed out on the roof of the Marquis of Robledo's house, the file of soldiers and Hernando Santa Cruz down in the parlor, fired a volley after them.

The pirate was furious over Dick's exposure of his real calling, and the way the boy tore up his privateer's commission.

But for the shirt of mail he wore, the two shots Dick fired at him would have killed the brutal wretch, and he muttered:

"Although Conchita was frightened into keeping my piracies secret, she believes his story that her name is Fairfax, and that I killed her mother, and abducted her many years ago. The boy saved his life by a miracle when he sprang from the topmast of the Diablo into the sea, and must have met my relentless pursuer, Robert Fairfax, from whom he learned the story."

Santa Cruz had taken a revolver from the Marquis' orderly, and rushing up the staircase after the fugitives, he was suddenly brought to a pause at the top by the door banging shut in his face, and the boy bolting it on the outside.

When the soldiers reached his side, they began to bang at the door in an effort to break it down with their carbines.

The clamoring alarmed Dick, and glancing around in the moonlight at the beautiful girl beside him, he said:

"Hark! how they pound to break the door!"

"Then let us jump down, and get in amid the sugarcane. We ought to be able to elude them there, hadn't we?"

"Our only safety lies in reaching the cane-brake, Conchita."

"How so?" she asked in surprise.

"Because your father, Robert Fairfax, is concealed there, with two horses, upon the backs of which we can escape."

"What—my father—so near!" she cried, in agitation.

"Within a dozen yards of us!" replied Dick cheerfully.

A shower of blows rattled against the door just then, making it shake, and the two young fugitives saw the marquis' negro servants darting about the beautiful garden in the square courtyard down below them, in the center of the building.

"The whole household is aroused by the noise and pistol shots," muttered Conchita, "and every effort will be made to capture us. More soldiers may arrive—the house may be surrounded to cut off our escape, and my unloyal action toward Hernando Santa Cruz has made him my enemy, as I have espoused your cause by aiding you. Find a means to get away quick."

"We can only drop down from these tiles to the clearing below and run over to—ah, here comes Fairfax!"

The white-bearded old gentleman had evidently seen them from his place of concealment amid the canestalks, and mounted on his own horse, he led the other, and came dashing across the clearing toward the side of the house, beneath them.

At the same juncture the negro farm hands in the row of hovels in back of the marquis' house came running out, pell-mell, women, men and children, wondering at the cause of all the excitement going on about the house.

"Dick!" shouted Mr. Fairfax, frantically. "I'll hold the horses down under you, and you and the girl can drop down on their backs!"

"Good!" acquiesced the boy. "It is your daughter, sir."

"Yes!" he cried eagerly. "Her face is not to be mistaken—it is the angelic counterpart of her mother's. Now, then—ready!"

The two horses swept up to the wall of the house, and, like most Cuban buildings, this one was no more than about twenty feet high.

The two fugitives stood on the edge, and Dick dropped the girl down into her father's arms, when Mr. Fairfax dashed away with her clasped to his bosom.

Dick was just in the act of dropping down upon the saddle of his own horse, when the door opening on the roof went open with a crash, and out rushed Santa Cruz and the soldiers.

"Halt!" yelled the pirate, leveling his revolver at the boy.

"Never!" replied Dick, waving his hand defiantly.

"Then die!" came the reply, and a pistol shot followed.

Dick dropped down from the roof, uttering a cry, for the ball grazed his head and cut him across the forehead.

He tumbled down upon the horse, and the startled beast reared up and started across the clearing, with the half-stunned boy hanging on its neck with both arms, in a dazed condition.

The soldiers on the roof rushed over to the edge and drew up in line, with their carbines pointed at Dick.

"Fire!" cried Santa Cruz, gnashing his teeth and fairly foaming at the lips with fury. "Shoot him down!"

The rattle of six simultaneous shots pealed out on the night air, and a neigh of almost the pathetic agony of a human being was wrung from the horse Dick was on.

It reared up, wheeled around, started ahead, came to an abrupt pause, flung the boy over its head to the ground, and fell dead.

A shout of triumph escaped the soldiers.

The negro plantation-hands had witnessed all that transpired, and seeing Dick strike the ground, they rushed over toward him.

Santa Cruz dropped down to the ground from the roof, and the soldiers returned to the interior of the house by the staircase.

The pirate rushed over toward Dick, when the badly shaken-up boy staggered to his feet, clutching his revolver in his hand, and, never uttering a single word, he opened fire on the crowd without comprehending exactly what he was doing.

The negroes scattered in every direction, badly scared.

Santa Cruz, watching his opportunity, and taking Dick behind his back, he knocked the revolver from the boy's hand.

"You are mine!" he shouted in diabolical glee.

"Let me alone!" panted the boy. "Let me alone!"

"Oh, no, my game little rooster, my brave young gunner—my revengeful little cur. There—you are down now!"

He flung the dazed boy upon the ground, Dick feebly trying to defend himself, and wondering why Robert Fairfax did not come to his assistance.

But the pirate soon secured him, hand and foot, with his belt and neckerchief, and as the soldiers just came rushing out of the house Dick was carried into the hall again.

Mr. Fairfax had disappeared with his daughter, on the horse's back, and the boy rapidly began to collect his faculties.

The paramount cause of Santa Cruz's rage was the loss of the privateer's commission, which Dick destroyed, for it could not be replaced short of two months, under any circumstances, and as the rascal had planned out his future movements, whereby he hoped to use the commission to suit his ends, he now found that he could not proceed under protection of the crown.

"Where is my daughter?" he demanded of Dick, when he revived.

"Gone—in her father's possession!" said the boy defiantly.

"Ah! Then Fairfax was near at hand, eh?"

"He was, but is gone, and you will never possess Conchita again."

"And I owe all my trouble to you!"

"True. I only wish it was worse, Hernando Santa Cruz!"

"My revenge shall fall terribly upon you, boy. Marquis, I demand this fellow of you. He is my prisoner, and shall remain in my power until my daughter is recovered from his accomplice!"

"Granted," replied Robledo. "I am perfectly satisfied."

A soldier bound his handkerchief about the wound on the boy's forehead, and as some of the sailors from the *Diablo* were summoned, the boy was carried away by several of them.

A boat at the water's edge carried the ill-fated boy on board the vessel, and he was taken down into the hold.

There he was locked up in a bin, and left to his sorrowful reflections.

"Once more a prisoner on this accursed vessel, in the power of that unscrupulous beast," he muttered bitterly. "What is to become of me? Death seems to be the only fate I can expect. The pirate knows I have sworn to avenge the death of my father and brother, fears me, and if I manage to escape his cruelty in one form, I am bound to suffer it in another!"

Dick Griswold's fate was a hard one to withstand, but he was full of pluck, and determined to put on a bold front.

Dick was placed in a quarter-boat the next day and sent adrift, without oars. He drifted with the current for two days, and on the third day was sighted by his old ship the *Thunderer* and taken on board, and his story heard. Dick was fed and placed in bed that afternoon and was soon in good shape again.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NAVAL ENGAGEMENT.

The following day dawned bright and clear, with a spanking breeze, a roll on the sea and no trace of the storm of the previous day.

It was toward evening, when going around Tortugas Island, at the northwest of Hayti, that all hands on board were startled to hear the distant sound of artillery coming over the water.

"Sail-ho! Sail-ho!" cried the lookout presently.

"Where away, Horton, where away?" cried Warren eagerly.

"Off to south'ard o' the island, sir."

"Pass the word to the quartermaster, Dick, to stand off on the starboard tack, and we will see who the fellow is."

"Sail-ho!" announced the lookout again.

"What do you make of her?" cried Warren.

"It's a second ship a-chasin' ther first one."

"Ah! That sounds suspicious."

"First vessel is a trader, sir."

"And the other?"

"A black, rakish schooner—the *Diablo*! I reckonize her now!"

Dick almost vented a cheer as he passed the captain's

order; and as soon as the crew became aware that a fight was imminent, their excited looks and eager actions showed very plainly that every man Jack was anxious for the fray.

Ports were raised on the gun deck, and every piece of armament was prepared for action on the spar deck.

Lively little powder-monkeys ran hither and thither, between the armorer at the magazine, and the master gunners at their various pieces of ordnance.

The captain of marines marshaled his men to their various posts, the sentries, with shouldered guns, paced their posts with restless looks, and the officers stationed themselves at quarters, ready to obey their superiors and give orders with that clock-like precision to which all were trained.

"There she is now, Mr. Warren!" cried Dick.

"And firing some pretty good shots at the trader, my boy."

"How savagely the Diablo pursues! There goes the trader's mainmast, and the gunners on the pirate are preparing to rake their victim fore and aft with the port—ah!"

"They see us! They come up with a round turn," cried Mr. Warren, "and while the unfortunate trader is coming this way for protection, Santa Cruz is preparing to fly."

"Let me haul him to, sir!" cried Dick anxiously.

"Only a shot from the bow-chaser, athwart his bows, though," admonished the captain warningly.

Dick gulped down a great lump that seemed to rise in his throat, and mastering the wild desire he had of firing the hundred pounder clean through the hated timbers of his cruel foe, he obeyed his captain's order.

The great ball went humming a command across the course of the pirate, for him to haul to.

Santa Cruz did not heed it, however, and turning his swift vessel off on the port tack, he made a desperate effort to escape, as he knew very well what capture meant.

"He won't obey!" exclaimed Dick savagely.

"What is his distance from us?" asked Warren.

"Close on two miles, sir," replied the boy.

"Send a shot through his rigging!"

A thrill of fierce joy passed over the boy, and as his assistant rammed home a charge, he sighted and angled the true old gun with careful precision.

The long-wished-for hour had come at last when he might man a gun on the Thunderer's deck, and drive a shot at his enemy that would deal death and destruction.

"All ready, sir!" he announced, a moment later.

"Fire!" exclaimed the commander.

Then came a pause—a deafening roar—a wild scream.

The shot sped like lightning, and passed through all the standing rigging and sails of the Diablo, carrying away ropes, cordage, canvas, and the top of the mizzenmast.

To their surprise the pirate vessel came about, and fired two shots from her starboard guns at them, one passing across the deck, killing and wounding several of the men, and the other imbedding itself in the planking, aft.

The Diablo turned about again to fire her port guns.

Warren was white with fury, and passed the word below to fire a broadside at the enemy from the starboard guns.

The Thunderer wore around, and the moment the gunners had their ordnance sighted, the weapons were fired.

There followed a frightful thunder that shook the sea, a dense mass of flame and smoke spurted from the portholes, and the rain of deadly missiles went roaring on their way toward the pirate, to deal their frightful destruction.

CHAPTER XV.

IN A TRAP.

When the cloud of smoke cleared away the crew of the frigate saw that the broadside had almost ruined the Diablo.

One of her masts had been carried away, hardly a rope was left standing, and the deck and hull were shattered badly.

Many of the ocean outlaws were killed and wounded, and the vessel presented an aspect of indescribable woe.

"He has sailed his last cruise!" exclaimed William Warren.

"Ruined!" exclaimed Dick, in delight.

"Ah! here is the trader, almost alongside of us."

"And there comes a boat from the pirate, sir."

"What are they going to do now, Dick?"

"Sebastian Gonzales, the first mate, is in command."

"Now I see their purpose. He carries a flag of truce."

"Will you respect it?"

"Of course. I say, Mr. Lovejoy, clear away a quarter boat and man it with four armed marines, if you please."

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the first officer.

"What! are you going to meet Gonzales, sir?" asked Dick.

"Certainly. Do you wish to accompany me?"

"With pleasure, sir. But look out for treachery."

"Ah, but a single glance at that ruined hulk shows me that we can expect little or no resistance from Santa Cruz."

The boy wore an anxious look, though, shrugged his shoulders and walked away meditatively.

He did not trust to appearances.

Gonzalez's boat came to a pause midway between the pirate's schooner and the man-of-war, the ugly first mate of the Diablo carrying a white napkin tied to the ramrod of a gun, which he waved in the air.

One of the quarter boats, manned by four oarsmen, went down, and the commander and Dick got in it.

"Give way!" said Warren, as the davit hooks were cast off, and the four oars fell and worked with automaton precision.

The quarter boat shot through the water, while the man-of-war lay up in the wind, floating the American flag at her masthead, and the trader sought protection under her guns, with the stars and bars at her gaff, showing her nationality.

In a short time Warren's boat came in speaking distance of that in which Gonzalez sat, causing the Spaniard no little surprise to see Dick in it alive and well.

"What do you want?" demanded Warren shortly.

"Santa Cruz is dead," replied the Spaniard significantly.

"Then you surrender?"

"Unconditionally," replied Gonzalez.

"Good! Had you refused we would blow you out of the water."

"What do you demand of us?"

"First, the delivery of yourself and the other officers."

"It shall be done, senor."

"Next, I want proof of Santa Cruz's death."

"You may come on board and see for yourself."

"Then give way. We will follow you. At the first sign of treachery my first officer has orders to run down your old hulk, and leave no one of you alive!"

"Senor, we are crushed—humbled—lost!"

The Spaniard's boat started back toward the wretched remains of the Diablo, and Warren's boat followed.

In due time they reached the disabled schooner, and went up the rope ladder to the deck.

A scene of intense desolation met their view.

Many of the rascally crew had sailed their last voyage, and the destructive cannon-balls had torn the upper works of the once handsome craft to pieces.

Not more than a score of Santa Cruz's men remained uninjured, and to Warren's amazement he saw the pirate captain standing by the stump of a broken mast.

"Rascal!" he exclaimed, turning to Gonzalez. "You have deceived me!"

"I know it, senor," coolly replied Sebastian.

"Why have you done so?"

"At my captain's order—to get you in our power!"

"In your power?" scornfully echoed Warren.

"As a hostage—as a protection for us to escape."

At this juncture Santa Cruz advanced with a diabolical grin on his smooth, rugged face, and bowing, he cried:

"We have tricked you very neatly, senor!"

"Your lives shall pay for this!" fumed Warren.

"Nonsense! Yours would be sacrificed first."

"Shoot the dogs down!" exclaimed Dick to the four sailors.

"Ah! You—alive, eh?" cried Santa Cruz, with a start.

"Ay! To avenge the deaths of my father and brother!"

"Throw down your arms and surrender!" exclaimed Santa Cruz savagely. "I am a desperate man, my Yankee friends, and am braving death to save my life."

"Never!" cried Warren furiously. "Draw, my men, and fire!"

"Listo!" exclaimed Santa Cruz to his men.

And before Warren, Dick or the four marines could draw their revolvers, the pirates had them covered with the carbines they carried in their hands!

"Heavens! We are lost, I fear!" exclaimed Mr. Warren.

"Fight them!" exclaimed Dick passionately.

"It would be folly—madness to resist!"

"They will kill us anyway, sir."

"But they are a score to our half dozen."

"There is no other remedy for our trouble. Besides, our shots will bring aid from the frigate."

Santa Cruz had been intently listening to the foregoing conversation, and a derisive laugh escaped him.

He understood them very well.

"Do not be fools!" he cried in English. "We would kill you, and could escape to Tortugas or Santo Domingo long before you could get assistance from your friends."

"We defy you!" exclaimed the angry Warren.

"Death before dishonor!" cried Dick.

"Ay, ay!" shouted the marines. "Death before dishonor!"

"Fire at them!" shouted the American officer.

A rattling volley followed, and the cries of the Spaniards attested to the fact that not a shot was wasted.

Bang! bang! bang! came a return fire.

The four marines fell to the deck, wounded, and Warren clapped his hand to his bosom, gasped for breath, and cried, in agonized tones:

"Dick, I am shot! Fly for your life!"

"Never!" cried the excited boy. "I shall not desert you in life or death. Back, you fiends, back, I say!"

His revolver was aimed and fired again and again at the motley horde of desperate rovers, and those that remained made a wild rush for the brave boy, fell upon him, and he was overpowered.

"Tie him over the muzzle of a gun!" yelled Santa Cruz, gnashing his teeth. "Blow him to pieces!"

One of the guns was loaded, and the angry pirates dragged the boy over to the piece and bound him over the muzzle.

Santa Cruz seized the lark string in his hand.

"Thus perish all my enemies!" he yelled furiously.

CHAPTER XVI.

GUN PRACTICE.

Just as Santa Cruz was about to pull the lark string, one of his men cried, in thrilling tones, in Spanish:

"The men on the man-o'-war see us!"

"And no doubt will attack us, too!" said Santa Cruz. "But ere they get here we will reach Hayti in our boats, and President General Nissage Saget of the south, or Domingue in the north, with his war-like proclivities will protect us."

The pirates cheered at this assurance of safety.

"Shoot!" cried Dick, recovering his faculties.

"Never!" shouted William Warren, rising up on his elbow and aiming a revolver at Santa Cruz.

"Disarm him!" shouted the Spaniard.

Warren fired ere any one could approach him.

A frenzied cry pealed from Santa Cruz's lips, the lark string dropped from his hand, and he reeled back, crying:

"I am shot! I am shot!"

He would have fallen to the deck had not one of his men caught and supported his body, and as a cry from one of the pirates announced that boats were going down from the man-of-war and were rapidly being manned, the pirates made a stampede for their own boats.

Only three were left serviceable.

They were hastily lowered and filled with men.

"Kill the dog who shot me!" howled Santa Cruz.

The brave commander was fast losing strength, but he was possessed of bull-dog courage and determination.

Several of the men fired at him, every one of the shots striking his body, but he staggered to his feet, agonized and near fainting, seized a knife from one of his men, and, rather reeling than walking over to Dick, he cut the boy's bonds, leaving him free, and cried:

"I've got my billet—let me die!"

"Shoot them down!" screamed Santa Cruz furiously.

"Protect yourself!" exclaimed the commander. "I am done for. God bless you, Gunboat Dick!"

The boy eagerly grasped the revolver, and Warren fell. Everybody but Santa Cruz and two of his men embarked in the rowboats by this time, and the pirates, utterly regardless of Dick, in the face of the danger menacing them, paid no heed to their captain's raving, but strained every effort to get him down into the boat.

Dick rushed toward them.

"Stop where you are or I will fire!" he cried.

The Spaniards did not understand English, but went on.

Unfortunately for Dick, just as he was about to come to a pause to fire at his detestable enemy, he tripped over a rope and fell prone upon the deck.

A violent contusion on the head half deprived him of consciousness, and he lay like a log for a few minutes.

Then gradually his faculties returned.

He scrambled to his feet and glared around.

"Gone!" he cried bitterly. "They have escaped me!"

He glanced over the expanse of water and saw his enemies rowing swiftly for the mainland.

"Am I to be thwarted this way?" he cried hollowly.

It seemed as if the boy would go mad with disappointment, but as his glance encountered one of the guns, a look of fierce joy overspread his face, and he muttered:

"No! One hope yet remains—the gun! I can use it like a toy. Perhaps I may baffle their escape!"

He ran over to the ordnance and saw that there was a large quantity of ammunition lying around it, while the piece itself was loaded and primed.

He aimed it at one of the boats, and caught hold of the lark string which Santa Cruz had held to kill him.

One sharp jerk made it roar and belch a charge of fire, smoke and whistling iron over the water.

True to its mark sped the shot, and it struck.

A cry of distress, an upheaval of water, and a mass of flying debris, oars and men, told the tale.

The boats from the man-of-war, filled with marines, were pulled toward the fugitives.

Before the gun cooled off, Dick rammed home another charge, and the gun was brought to bear upon another of the quarter boats.

Boom! rang out the shot.

Again was a boat demolished, and many of its crew wounded, killed and drowned by the shot.

"This is vengeance!" Dick muttered, and his wild eyes gloated over the scene of destruction for a moment.

"My father and brother's deaths are nearly avenged. But one more shot—to kill the arch-fiend who brought about all this misery, and then——"

But by this time he had the still smoking, hot gun loaded and was carefully aiming it.

He saw that Santa Cruz was in the boat, too.

An exultant expression was upon the boy's face, for he was perfectly confident he could hit the boat.

Unfortunately, though, one of the quarter boats from the frigate darted between the ruined Diablo and Santa Cruz's boat just as Dick was about to fire the gun.

A cry of exasperation burst from Dick's lips.

"Am I to be baffled this way?" he muttered bitterly.

The man-o'-war's men kept straight on after the pirates, and in such a position that if Dick shot at his enemies and missed, he might hit his friends.

It was very galling to him, and after waiting a short time and seeing no improvement of the situation, he finally gave it up.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TWO CONSPIRATORS.

The other boats were picking up those of the fugitives who escaped destruction in the boats Dick shot at, and the boy raised a signal for help.

A gig left the man-of-war and approached, as the pirates had not left the boat, having taken the quarter boat away in which the commander came.

When the gig arrived alongside with a midshipman and two marines, and the trouble was explained to them, they expressed the utmost solicitude for their unfortunate commander and messmates, and all were hastily transferred to the boat.

The Diablo was fast sinking, as she made water rapidly in the hold, and all hurriedly left her.

The gig had hardly gone a hundred yards from the hulk when it suddenly rose up from the water, took a final plunge and sank forever beneath the waves.

"A good riddance to a very dangerous craft," said Dick, with a sigh of relief. "Never again will Santa Cruz scourge the high seas on her planks. We can now look for him amid the dissatisfied rebels of the island of Santo Domingo, where, as he said, he will find fraternal spirits with Saget or Domingue. Under the protection of the French Government

he may be safe, but the Thunderer will tear Port au Prince from its foundation with her battery of guns if he is not delivered into our hands."

When the gig reached the frigate, Dick saw that the trader had sailed away toward Cuba.

The fire injured men were transferred to the hospital, where the surgeon attended to their wounds.

Within an hour the four quarter boats returned, bringing two-thirds of Santa Cruz's men as prisoners, but the pirate captain had made good his escape to the mainland in his boat.

The first officer assumed command of the Thunderer while Mr. Warren was laid up in the hospital, and under his direction the yards were squared away and the vessel was steered for Santo Domingo.

Dick's rage and disappointment over Santa Cruz's escape knew no bounds, and he registered a mental vow to go ashore when they reached the port and never rest until he succeeded in apprehending Santa Cruz.

None of the bitter rancor the pirate wrought had yet left the boy's heart, and he felt that all he had to live for was the downfall of his enemy.

The night closed dark and storm-threatening, when the frigate got under way again and headed for Port au Prince.

Before morning a rowboat was encountered containing a native, from whom alarming news was gleaned.

The two rulers of the island were in danger of their lives at the hands of the dissatisfied populace, who openly threatened to assassinate General Saget.

On the following day the frigate made port.

Dick attired himself in civilian's clothing, got leave of absence and went ashore to hunt for his enemy.

The city was in a political tumult of dissent, and the boy soon learned that Saget was in hiding, while the populace were hunting for him to take his life.

The Americans—in fact, all foreigners—were hated and looked upon with undisguised suspicion by the natives.

Dick spent the entire day roving about the city, and at nightfall made his way to a cafe to have his supper.

He sat at a table embowered amid a lot of tropical flowers in the square courtyard, in the center of the building, and idly listened to the French and Spanish conversation going on at the different tables near him, he understanding both languages.

There were two men sitting at a table close by him, a dense cluster of shrubbery hiding them from his sight, both speaking Spanish, but not so subdued that he could not overheard every word they uttered, so close were they.

The boy was startled at the purport of what they said.

"You know where he is hidden?" asked one.

"More," responded the other, in a hissing whisper, "I have been in Domingue's company, spoken with him, and know all."

"And you will confess where he is?"

"Upon the condition that I am handsomely paid."

"You had my assurance of that."

"Then I will make you a proposition."

"Name it, senor."

"I will betray him for the money you offer."

"So you once said."

"And for double the amount I will kill him for you."

"For the inhabitants of this isle, rather say."

"Any one; it makes no difference to me. Your answer?"

"I agree. Here is my hand on it."

"Then the deed shall be accomplished."

"Assassins!" muttered Dick, with a shudder.

"How will you proceed?" asked the first speaker.

"To-morrow you can meet me and witness all."

"Where shall the rendezvous be?"

"In the main hall of the palace at six in the evening."

"Depend upon seeing me there at the time stated."

"Good! I shall shoot him."

They whispered after that, and with his curiosity roused to see who the conspirators were who threatened the life of one of the rulers of Santo Domingo, the boy parted the shrubbery and peered through the aperture at them.

"Santa Cruz!" he muttered in horror, as his glance fell upon the one who offered to commit the murder.

The other was an utter stranger to the boy.

The word Dick whispered caught the pirate's ears.

He glanced over at the shrubbery with a violent start, tore a dagger from his belt, leaped to his feet, and cried warningly:

"A spy is watching us! That accursed Yankee boy!"

His accomplice rose in alarm, and the two rushed over to the spot where they had seen Dick's face.

But when they arrived there the boy was gone!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ASSASSINATION.

When Hernando Santa Cruz parted company with his friend and left the cafe, Dick stole out of a nearby room into which he had slipped, and pursued the rascal.

The pirate made his way through the darkest streets of the ruinous city, and glanced back over his shoulder ever and anon to see if he was being followed.

This habit is common in the West Indies, though, as footpads do not hesitate to stab a wayfarer in the back in order to rob him, and every civilian is on the alert in the street.

Dick evaded being seen by the utmost dexterity.

He lurked along in the densest shadows, and, quick to see his enemy in the act of turning his head, he was never at a loss for a convenient door in which to hide.

Within a short time they arrived at the palace, and the pirate passed the guard at the door and vanished.

"He must be upon terms of intimacy with Domingue," the young sailor muttered. "Now, how am I to get in?"

He saw that no means was visible, save the door by which Santa Cruz entered, and he boldly approached the sentry.

"Halt!" exclaimed that personage, sternly, to him.

"I am following my captain," said Dick, undaunted.

"Your captain?" echoed the soldier querulously.

"Hernando Santa Cruz," replied Dick readily.

"Oh! Pass in," replied the other, stepping aside.

It was made evident by Dick's ruse that Santa Cruz was well known there, and was a power to be obeyed.

He did not utter a word, but went through the portals, and soon heard the echoing footsteps of his enemy ascending a staircase some distance back in the corridor.

Creeping up the stairs, he went along a balcony that ran around the four sides of the middle courtyard and saw his enemy heading for a large door of colored glass that opened on the balcony on the south side.

The huge rascal knocked for admittance and entered.

Dick crept up to the door, and peering in through a crevice, he saw a brilliantly illumined room, nicely furnished in willow ware and having rugs on the floor.

A stout negro with a brutal face, bulging forehead, and attired in a military suit sat by a front window smoking a cigar and reading some documents.

Beside him stood Santa Cruz, bowing and smiling.

It was General Domingue, and he imagined the pirate was his most sincere friend and patron of many favors.

Ignorant of the vile plot against his life, and smiling at the diabolical Spaniard, he was pleasantly asking:

"Well, what news for me, Santa Cruz?"

"Bad, very bad, senor," said the Spaniard, shaking his head.

"The public is still clamoring—is still mad?"

"Your life is in the utmost danger every moment."

"What would you advise me to do?"

"Have you any money or jewels?"

"Yes, a large amount of both."

"Gather them at once and fly in disguise."

"Is the danger as great as that, Santa Cruz?"

"Ay, worse than you imagine. Spies around your palace, even though everybody imagines you are concealed. To venture into the street would be to sign your own death-warrant if you were known, for your life alone would appease them."

The negro general arose, a look of despair upon his face.

"And if I escape from here?" he asked tremulously.

"I have a friend whose vessel will carry you to Jamaica."

"Santa Cruz, you are a good, true friend."

"Let me prove it. Will you fly?"

"It is hard to resign one's crown, but my life is worth more to me than glory. I will go—in disguise."

"Have you got one at hand?"

"This cloak will do to cover my figure."

"Then get what you need and come at once."

"This box," said the general, taking a small one from a

desk drawer, "contains a large sum of money and many valuable jewels—more than a thousand times enough to defray the expenses of my miserable flight."

The dark eyes of Santa Cruz glittered balefully.

"Lose no time!" he exclaimed impatiently.

The general hastily prepared himself for flight.

In a few moments he was ready and grasped the box.

"Shall I take a servant?" he asked.

"Would you ruin yourself?" impatiently demanded the pirate. "You must be unencumbered in every respect. Be guided by me, and your life will be saved."

"Poor fool!" muttered Dick compassionately. "The viper whom you so blindly depend on is your worst enemy?"

Not daring to warn the general there, as he had his own safety to look out for, Dick resolved to wait until they reached the street ere he put Domingue upon his guard.

The two men approached the door, and Dick drew back and got himself ensconced in a sheltering doorway.

He saw the two men emerge on the balcony in the moonlight, and come toward him, the general in advance.

But ere they had gone five steps, the boy saw Santa Cruz suddenly raise a revolver, aim at Domingue, and fire!

Bang! rang out the spiteful report.

"Great heavens, I am shot!" shrieked the general.

He dropped the box, flung up his arms, and fell flat.

Out sprang Dick just as Santa Cruz snatched up the box.

"He is dead!" muttered the pirate.

"Murderer!" cried Dick, confronting him.

"Oh! Gunboat Dick!" gasped the rascal, in alarm.

He dropped the revolver, dashed the boy aside, and rushed into the building, crying, in frantic tones:

"Help—help! Domingue has been murdered by a Yankee boy!"

"He is laying it on me!" murmured the startled Dick.

He was just about to run after Santa Cruz, and had picked up the assassin's revolver to shoot him with it, when out on the balcony filed several soldiers, Santa Cruz at their head.

"See! There stands Domingue's murderer, with the pistol still in his hand! I saw him do it!" cried Santa Cruz thrillingly.

"Liar!" hoarsely exclaimed Dick, turning pale.

The soldiers covered Dick with their muskets.

"Hold up your hands and surrender!" cried one, "or we will shoot you down like a dog!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RIOTERS.

Standing over the corpse of General Domingue, clutching Santa Cruz's revolver, and ordered by the soldiers to surrender, Gunboat Dick found himself in a desperate frame of mind.

The pirate accused the boy of his own deed, and had secreted the box of money and jewels which he had taken from his victim after shooting him.

"Surrender!" cried the soldier to Dick.

"Never!" replied the boy vehemently. "I did not do this deed! It was yonder rascal himself."

"He lies!" shouted Santa Cruz furiously.

In that moment they were lost.

A loud murmuring was to be heard within the palace.

It momentarily drew nearer, and Santa Cruz cried:

"Look! A rabble is approaching!"

"It is a riot!" cried a soldier.

"Down with Domingue!" came the hoarse cry.

"Fly! They seek the President's life!" cried a soldier.

"And will murder us!" added another.

In deep dismay they lowered their arms and fled.

"Fools!" screamed Santa Cruz. "First kill this assassin!"

But the soldiers were gone ere he finished speaking, and in his impotent fury, Santa Cruz pulled a pistol from his pocket, aimed it at Dick, and was about to fire, when the boy leveled the pistol he held and shot at him.

The pirate uttered a cry of pain and staggered back, with his hand clasped at his bosom.

For a moment Dick imagined he had killed him, but the desperate wretch recovered himself suddenly, turned around and dashed through the doorway.

Nearer and nearer drew the hoarse cries of:

"Down with Domingue!"

In their midst they held Santa Cruz, who was trying hard to escape from their clutches.

"We have got his friend!" shouted one.

"We will kill the brutal, thieving negro!" added another.

"Who is this boy?" yelled another.

"Domingue's best friend!" shouted Santa Cruz viciously.

"Tear him to pieces!" roared a soldier.

"Down with him!" exclaimed another.

"Domingue is dead!" said a man.

The crowd made a rush for the body, and as Dick saw that the mass of desperate humanity would overwhelm and crush him if he remained, he very wisely retreated into Domingue's room.

Then he locked and bolted the door.

Some of the rioters made a rush for the door, while the rest seized upon the yet warm corpse of the dead president, and dragged it, mid curses, shouts and yells, out of the palace into the street.

"I am in a heap of trouble now!" muttered Dick ruefully.

He ran to one of the windows.

It was nearly thirty feet from the street, and was covered by iron bars an inch thick.

To break them without tools was utterly impossible.

"It seems as if I must perish in here," he gasped.

Another shower of blows on the door made it shake and threaten to fall to pieces, while he heard his malignant enemy exciting the crowd to greater exertion by the foulest lies of Dick's infamy.

"Good heavens!" gasped the boy desperately. "What is to become of me in this strait? Is there no other avenue of escape?"

There was none except the iron-barred window.

In a corner of the room stood a short beam used for barring the door, as all these tropical houses are secured on the inside.

He snatched it up, rushed over to the window, inserted it, between two of the iron bars, and bringing a leverage to bear upon it, by main strength he forced an opening between the bars wide enough to admit the passage of his body.

Seeing that he could squeeze through the opening, he dropped the beam, seized a sheet and counterpane from the bed, tied them together, and fastened one end to one of the iron bars.

Then he forced himself through the bars, seized the extempore rope, and began to let himself down to the street, hand-over-hand, as rapidly as he could.

This was hardly accomplished when the door of the president's room was burst open, and, headed by Santa Cruz, Dick's enemies rushed into the apartment.

One glance showed the pirate how he escaped.

"He has gone out the window!" he yelled. "Fire at him!"

Down went Dick, faster, as these ominous words reached his ears, and reaching the end of the sheet, he dropped.

He was within five feet of the sidewalk, and landed lightly upon his feet, just as his enemies reached the window.

He crouched up close against the wall of the palace and hurried toward a doorway in which to crouch.

A shower of bullets flew about him, but none struck the boy, and he reached the doorway.

But just then out of it ran some of his enemies who had come downstairs in pursuit of him.

Out in the middle of the street ran Dick.

As he did so, and the crowd ran for him, a shriek pealed out on the night air, and a female figure dashed over to his side, in a twinkling, from the sidewalk.

An arm was flung around his neck, and as he glanced at the girl who had hold of him, he saw she was Conchita!

"Oh, Dick!" she gasped, in affright. "This is awful!"

"Fly! Save yourself! They will shoot—perhaps kill you!"

"No; I will save you or die with you!"

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

The crowd of rioters who rushed out of the doorway saw the heroic action of the brave girl, and, with amazed faces, they came to a pause.

"Stand back!" cried Conchita thrillingly. "Dare to shoot at this boy and you will kill me first!"

"Leave him, or we will kill both of you!" some one cried from the midst of the crowd.

"Never!" was her dauntless reply.

"Then fire at them!" said the same voice, and the speaker stepped out in plain view.

"It is Hernando Santa Cruz!" gasped Dick.

The rioters raised their weapons to fire, the pirate having lyingly asserted that the boy was General Domingue's dearest friend.

"Our last hour has come," gasped Dick, "but ere my life is sacrificed I will kill the murderer of my unhappy father and brother!"

He raised the revolver he yet held—Santa Cruz's own weapon, with which the pirate assassinated the negro president—and aimed at his foe.

The pirate beheld what he was doing, and was quick to follow the desperate boy's example.

"It is one life or the other now!" he cried.

They were the last words Santa Cruz ever uttered.

Two reports rang out.

A shriek of agony followed the shots.

Santa Cruz fell dead.

Dick's bullet pierced his brain!

The boy's vengeance was now complete.

Appalled, the crowd stood looking on, unable to move hand or foot for an instant.

This unexpected tragedy amazed them intensely, and was witnessed by a tremendous mass of people.

"Murder!" cried some one, in horror.

"No. Revenge!" exultantly cried Dick.

"It is the pirate, Hernando Santa Cruz!" added another.

"The murderer of my father and brother!" said Dick.

"He carries a box in his hand," said the same man.

"Which he stole from General Domingue when he assassinated him just now!" cried Dick.

"You have avenged Domingue!" shrieked a man.

"No, no, no!" the boy cried.

"You have! We will avenge that shot!"

Dick and the girl glanced around uneasily, and saw that they were surrounded by thousands of people, all of whom bore a threatening attitude.

They were completely hemmed in on all sides, with not a visible avenue of escape.

Not a man in the mass was not armed with a weapon, and every one had a scowling face.

Beset on all sides by such a horde, Dick saw that his chances of escape were not enviable.

A glance at the revolver increased his alarm.

Not a cartridge was left in it.

The last shot had killed Santa Cruz.

"We have nothing to hope for but death, Conchita," he said to the brave girl, and tears gathered in his eyes as he added: "But you need not share my fate. Go, devoted creature, and let me die alone. There is no need of your perishing."

He flung down his useless revolver, and baring his breast he turned to the crowd and cried:

"Shoot! I am not afraid of death!"

A thousand weapons covered the brave boy.

"Hurrah for Gunboat Dick!"

"Hurrah for the Thunderer!"

"Hurrah for the Stars and Stripes!"

Bang! bang! bang! bang! bang!

This was what followed.

The boy and girl were fairly bewildered as they glanced around; then they comprehended everything.

A hundred armed man-of-war's men had seen all, and bursting through the crowd of rioters, with pistols and cutlasses, they attacked the rascals, and speedily put them to flight.

It occupied some time for Dick and his little friend to realize that they were saved.

"See the cowards run! Oh, for the Yankee sailors! Such lion hearts and noble courage! They fight with a laugh on their lips and a flash in their eyes and a bravery that is not to be matched," said Conchita.

"I regret that I am not in their midst to wield a pistol and cutlass, if only to add to the lesson they are teaching those bloodthirsty rebels," said Dick wistfully. "But, no; I must guard your precious life, and get you out of danger, on board the dear old warship. Come on, Conchita, come on, you brave girl, and may heaven bless you!"

And, hand in hand, the boy and girl walked away.

Dick and Conchita went on board the man-of-war, and meeting Sam Lovejoy on the deck, in company with William Warren, the wounded commander, who had succeeded to Harry Griswold's captaincy, they told the officers all about what had occurred on shore.

Their amazement was intense.

"The whole city is in an uproar," said Dick.

"Then harm may come to my marines!" Warren exclaimed, in some alarm.

"You had better send them aid, sir," said Dick.

"Then I shall send men ashore with the order to stop it, or I will threaten to bombard the city with our guns!"

There was a French frigate in port, to which a messenger was dispatched.

Men were sent ashore, armed to the teeth, from both vessels, and Dick left the girl on board the Thunderer, and accompanied them.

A night of intense excitement followed, and long before the dawn of day the riot was suppressed.

We will add here, as a matter of history, that Domingue was succeeded by a man of honesty, named Boisrond Canal, the best man who ever ruled the discontented people of Hayti.

Disgusted at the corruption of the officials, he voluntarily proceeded to the cathedral, laid his sword on the altar and sailed for Jamaica, to be succeeded by Salomon, the predecessor of the pretender Legitime.

With the break of day the sailors all returned to the Thunderer, and the first one to welcome Dick was Conchita, who was evidently greatly attached to the boy.

"You are not injured?" she asked anxiously.

"Not in the least," he replied. "There was no fighting."

"And the rebels?"

"Have all disappeared."

"I am so glad."

"I met with a terrible scene at the palace."

"What was it?"

"You remember the treasure box Santa Cruz had?"

"I do, indeed; the incentive he had to kill Domingue."

"Well, it led to a fight. I was passing the spot and saw the pirate's body lying in the gutter. A crowd was rushing toward it—men who had seen him in possession of the box. They fell upon the body in an excited heap, all fighting for possession of the box. While so engaged a boy captured it, fleetly ran away, and to vent their chagrin and disappointment, they seized upon Santa Cruz's body, hung it by the neck to the entrance of the palace and were stoning it when the marines arrived upon the scene and drove them away."

"A fit ending for the wretch!" commented Conchita.

"Well may you say so."

The two spoke at some length further, and as some duty called Dick away presently, they separated and occupied themselves.

The Thunderer remained at Port au Prince two days longer, and then set sail.

The riot had been quelled, a liberal government was established, and peace reigned over the island.

With the death of Santa Cruz, the sinking of his piratical vessel, and the capture of most of his crew, the work of the frigate's cruise was ended.

The bowsprit was turned northward, and under a vast area of canvas the noble man-of-war started, homeward bound.

The Thunderer made good headway and in due course of time reached harbor.

A report of what occurred was made to the Secretary of War, and as the cruise was ended and the men's time served, they were all paid off and went ashore.

Dick took Conchita under his care from the beginning of their sojourn on land, and, obeying her wish, he sent her to a private seminary, where she was educated as became a girl who was to take up her residence in America.

The boy gained possession of his father's fortune and renouncing the navy, he took up his residence in the metropolis.

Within five years he had grown up to the estate of a man, and as a natural sequence upon finding Conchita graduated a beautiful and accomplished girl, he married her.

In conclusion we can only add that Gunboat Dick is now a name of the past, even though the original yet lives, but time has wrought no change in him, for to this day he would rather prefer death before dishonor!

Next week's issue will contain "FIFTY RIDERS IN BLACK; or, THE RAVENS OF RAVEN FOREST." By Howard Austin.

CURRENT NEWS

A site near the southern extremity of the Sierra Chica, about 25 miles southwest of Cordoba, has been chosen for the reflecting telescope of 1½ meters (59 inches) aperture, now in course of construction for the National Observatory of Argentina. The new observatory will be erected in the course of the next year. Director Perrine states that the present observatory at Cordoba will be retained, in addition to the new one.

The colonies captured from Germany during the war will never be returned, said Walter Hume Long, Secretary of State for the Colonies, speaking as a representative of the overseas dominions in an address the other day. "We acquired possession of different German colonies in various parts of the world as a consequence of this war," he said. "Let no man think these territories will ever return to German rule."

Armed merchant ships desiring passage through the Panama Canal can pass through the same as other merchantmen if the Governor of the Canal Zone is satisfied that their armament is solely for defense. The question having been raised recently by the application of a Japanese vessel, the War Department on the advice of the State Department on January 23 instructed the Governor of the Canal Zone to be guided by the President's circular to customs collectors at the beginning of the European war.

S. P. Marble, of Annapolis, Ala., who has just returned from a trip to Georgia, tells a remarkable story. He says he was in the country near Bowdoin when he learned that revenue officers had destroyed an illicit distillery a few days before. Arriving at the point, he found a number of quail feeding on the sour mash the revenue men had thrown out. Every one of the birds was drunk, according to Mr. Marble, and they were unable to get away. He picked up thirteen of them and says he will keep them until they sober up.

Because of the stoppage of tin imports, Germany is reported to have prohibited the use of solder containing more than thirty per cent of tin, and the tin so used must have been recovered from dross or scrap. The making of soldered joints has to be restricted to cases where lapping, riveting and electric or autogeneous welding are impracticable. It is stated in the Iron Age that a usable solder can be prepared from ten parts of tin, 80 of lead and ten of cadmium. Although cadmium is three times as expensive as tin, this is considered of no consequence because of the necessity of using tin for other purposes.

The Lake Erie lizard, otherwise known as the "mud puppy," is a delicate morsel, according to J. J. Stanahan, former Superintendent of the United States fish hatchery at Put-in-Bay, Ohio, who, discussing aquatic foodstuffs, said that while at Put-in-Bay he always kept a supply on hand at the hatchery. Stanahan said he prefers "mud puppy" to the finest variety of fish, and that "put up right, he is a dish fit for the gods, and has whitefish skinned a mile." Many lizards are caught in the vicinity of Put-in-Bay, especially through the ice in winter, and enterprising islanders figure, it develops, that in view of the high cost of living a profitable market in time may be established.

Charles M. Murphy, "Mile a Minute" Murphy, motorcycle policeman, has retired after fifteen years of service. He has had many serious accidents, but none could keep him down until September 13, when riding on Manhattan bridge the wheel of his motorcycle slipped and struck the wheel of an automobile. Murphy was thrown to the bridge unconscious, his left leg broken in three places. Since the accident Murphy, who lives at 250 New York avenue, Brooklyn, has spent nine weeks in Gouverneurs' Hospital and was on sick leave the remainder of the time. It was not until recently he quit hopping and retired. The nickname "Mile a Minute" Murphy was won when he was paced by a Long Island Railroad train at the rate of sixty miles an hour on a board between the rails. Prior to that he had been a champion bicycle rider, having won over 1,800 prizes.

Rear Admiral Peary, Chairman of the National Aerial Coast Patrol Commission, emphasized the other night the bearing of the present critical international situation on the necessity for an adequate aeroplane coast patrol. "If Congress," he went on, "should order the immediate mobilization of all air-men in the country; should enlist the various aerial organizations and interests of the country in registering applicants, and should make mandatory the training of 2,500 aviators in six months and of the entire 5,000 in a year, it would go far toward remedying a present deficit in our defense which presents possibilities of the gravest danger. The aeroplane will be the quickest and cheapest antidote for the submarine. Its speed and range of vision is three times that of the fastest destroyers. It can detect and follow a submarine that is entirely invisible to any surface craft. It can destroy the submarine when it comes near the surface. One thousand hydroaeroplanes along our Atlantic Coast will double the efficiency of our destroyers and mosquito fleet and increase the value of our coast protection from 200 to 300 per cent."

SIMPLE SAM

—OR—

Not So Green As He Looked
THE POOR BOY

BY J. P. RICHARDS

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XXI (Continued).

The next day Sam bought the lumber to build a cow house, and with saw and hammer he at once went to work.

Some wondered why the boys were out on the river at such a place, and shouted warnings to them not to go too near the dam.

"Sam, do you know how to build a cow house?" his mother asked.

"Yes, Marm."

"Well, you never built anything of the kind in your life."

"No, Marm; nor did I ever ride a tricky mule until that circus came along, but I got away with him, didn't I?"

She laughed and remarked:

"But the mule was already built, Sam."

"Yes; so am I, and you just wait and give me time, and you'll see me build a good cow house."

Quite a number of friends came around and saw him at work, and they wondered what sort of a structure he was going to build, as they had never seen him doing that kind of work before.

One day Lena Heywood came to see his mother, and hearing that Sam was out building a cow house, she insisted on going out to see him at work.

"Sam, what in the world are you building?" she asked.

"I'm building a house for a cow."

"Where is your cow?"

"I haven't bought her yet, but I know just where I can get her, and what I'll have to pay for her. She's a splendid cow, and gives four gallons of milk a day."

"Well, she must be a splendid cow."

CHAPTER XX.

HOW SAM BOUGHT REAL ESTATE.

Lena Heywood shook hands with him and congratulated him for having presented his mother with a home.

"Sam, I have lived here in Sussex all my life," she said, "and you are the first man in the town so far as I know who has bought his mother a home. But who is going to milk that cow, Sam?"

"I guess I will," he laughed.

"But did you ever milk a cow?"

"No; I never did, but it's an easy thing to learn. If I can't manage her any other way, I'll dig a ditch and throw her into it, and milk her and then pull her out."

His mother and the girl laughed heartily.

"Why, Sam, we have a cow house on our place, and it seems to me that you are not building yours right."

"Just wait till I finish it, Lena, and then you go home, and make your father tear down his, and build a new one after my style."

"All right; I'll come and look at it after you have finished it; but when will that be?"

"I guess it will take me about two weeks," he said, "as I am doing all the work myself."

Two weeks later the cow house was finished, and it was really different from any other in the town.

Sam laughingly boasted that it had all the conveniences that a cow could require.

It had an arrangement, by means of which, whenever it rained, the water from the roof went into the water trough, and an overflow pipe conveyed the waste outside on the street.

There were other little conveniences that excited the wonder of the owners of cows and several of them asked him if he had any patent on the improvement.

He informed them that he had not, and that if any of them wanted to copy it, they were at liberty to do so.

"Sam," said one of them, "I don't see but one mistake that you have made."

"What is that?" he asked.

"You should have arranged it so the cow could sweep out her stall with her tail every morning."

"I thought of that," said he, looking as serious as an undertaker, "but I didn't wish her to make a broom of her tail, because she is entitled to the free use of that for a fly brush."

People laughed, and a reporter of the paper called to inspect the little cow house, and he gave a pretty accurate description of it.

Then Sam went after the cow, drove her home, and got one of the neighbors to show him how to milk her.

He sat down opposite her, and looked on, until she had gotten about half through with the work.

Then he took hold and finished the job.

"Why, Sam," she exclaimed, "you milk as though you had been at it all your life."

"Madam, it's never necessary to show me but once how a thing ought to be done. Now accept this pail of milk for your trouble in teaching me the lesson."

She thanked him, and declined to take it.

"Oh, you've got to take it," said Sam. "I'll take the milk around to your place," and he did so against her protest, after which he accepted her advice about a churn, a milk strainer, measure, etc.

The next morning his mother went out to see him milk the cow.

(To be continued.)

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

Nearly 1,000 students of Princeton University have joined the provisional battalion which has been established for the purpose of affording the undergraduates an opportunity to become familiar with the manual of arms. Drills in open and close formation will be conducted by Capt. Stuart Heintzelman, U. S. A.

When John F. P. Ernst, of St. Louis, Mo., killed a gift goose he found in its crop a half dollar, twenty-six quarters, twenty-six dimes, thirteen nickels and two pennies. This two-legged bank was a Christmas bonus given Ernst by the employees of a grocery store where he is chief clerk. There was no refund, as Ernst considers the gift of a goose includes the ballast.

Calling trained men to the colors by wire is the novel method adopted by the United States Marines who are sending hundreds of telegrams to former "soldiers of the sea," whose services are especially desired in the face of a national crisis. Telegrams sent from headquarters to individual ex-Marines read as follows: "Marine Corps needs her trained soldiers. Please communicate with nearest recruiting station. If you cannot return to colors yourself, please secure one recruit for Marine Corps." The telegram is signed by Brig. Gen. John A. Lejeune.

Frequently attacked along the Polish front by packs of wolves, the soldiers of the German and Russian armies instinctively cease fighting each other and make common war on the invaders. During these digressions from their regular task the soldiers of both armies are immune from sniping by a sort of tacit understanding. While a party of German scouts was engaged in a skirmish with Russian scouts recently, the wounded were attacked by wolves. Both sides ceased fighting and attacked the wolves, killing about fifty. After the wolves had been killed or routed, the soldiers separated, neither party being molested while returning to its own trenches.

A bicycle lamp which fulfills a dual function has lately made its appearance. On fairly lighted streets it can be burned low so as to warn pedestrians and drivers of other vehicles of its approach, and on unlighted or poorly lighted streets and country roads it can be brilliantly lighted in order to illuminate the roadway ahead so that the driver can ride in safety. The present bicycle or motorcycle lamp makes use of a double-filament lamp operating on two cells of dry battery. The filaments are controlled by a three-way switch, and by turning to the high point the lamp produces two candle-power.

and by turning to the low point the lamp produces but one-half candle-power.

Henry Ford has decided to discontinue on March 1 the Neutral Conference for Continuous Mediation at The Hague, the peace-seeking organization which grew out of the famous pilgrimage of the ship Oscar II., and which has been in operation in Europe since December, 1915. Mr. Ford's action is not because he is not in favor of peace, but it seemed to him that there was nothing further that the Conference could do at present; and also it appeared to him rather inconsistent that he should have an organization in the Old World striving for peace while his great working organization here is getting ready to make war implements should the United States become involved in the conflict.

The Italian Rivista Marittima states that according to news received from Holland the Germans have built submarines having no periscope. There is a lens on each side of the boat, which, combined with mirrors and other lenses properly arranged, make it possible to carry out the necessary observations. It is admitted that this carries with it the disadvantage of requiring the boat to navigate closer to the surface than is the case with boats provided with a periscope, but this disadvantage is considered to be more than compensated for by the absence of a periscope tube extending above the water surface. A powerful beam of light can be projected at night through the lens opening.

Joseph Sulser has opened a butcher shop at 2382 First avenue, near 122d street, for the sale exclusively of horse meat and sausages made of horse flesh. The shop is the first of its kind in this city and the business is being conducted with the permission of the Department of Health, which gave authority a year ago for the sale of horse meat.

Round and sirloin steaks are quoted at 12 cents per pound, while the inferior cuts sell as low as 6 cents. Horse meat frankfurters retail at 10 cents per dozen.

There is a sign over the shop reading "Horseflesh for sale here," and the paper bag containers for the meat are marked: "Composed wholly of horseflesh."

The inspector of the Department of Health who visited the shop on the day it was opened reported that the sales for the first five hours amounted to forty pounds.

Lucius P. Brown, director of the Bureau of Foods and Drugs, said the horses are inspected by a Department of Health inspector before and after killing at a Long Island slaughter house.

Horse flesh is eaten in France, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and other European countries.

TIMELY TOPICS

CLAIRVOYANT FAILS.

Mme. Strand, who was warned to quit business several months ago, applied for reinstatement to Police Judge Sullivan of San Francisco, Cal.

She said that many of her clients considered her services invaluable, and that she was besieged on all sides to reopen her fortune telling parlors.

"If you can tell me anything true about my family life," said the court, "I will be willing to recommend that your request be granted."

Mme. Strand went into a trance. She asked if it was not true that his wife was a blonde and had a slight impediment in her speech.

"You're wrong," said Sullivan, "you lose."

UNIFORM TRAFFIC RULES.

A State Traffic Act, prescribing uniform traffic regulations for all cities and villages, was introduced in the Assembly by Clarence F. Welsh of Albany, N. Y. The bill is approved by the State Conference of Mayors, automobile associations, Corporation Counsels, Police Commissioners, Public Service Commissions and street railways.

It gives to pedestrians the right to cross the street and highway, but except at street intersections and street crossings, where they have the right of way over vehicles, provides that they do so at their own risk. It prohibits pedestrians from crossing at street intersections diagonally.

Among detailed regulations for vehicles is one which says that no vehicle may pass within seven feet of either side of a street car which has stopped to discharge or take on passengers.

The bill prohibits reckless driving, gives local authorities power to make addition ordinances regulating the speed in parks and parkways and congested streets and to pass ordinances establishing parking places, safety zones and cab stands.

PUT \$500 IN BOTTLE.

A bottle of any sort will represent something very unattractive in the life of Savario Nartachioni, of 23 Sherman street, Long Island City. The simple act of picking up a bottle from a vacant lot at Beebe avenue and Marion street resulted in his being held by Magistrate Conway in \$2,500 bail on the charge of extortion.

Fleice Angelillo has a grocery store at 21 Payntar avenue, in the Italian settlement of Long Island City, and up to a month ago he was as happy as grocers generally are who are engaged in running a small store for minor profits. About that time he received a letter. It was from a man who demanded \$500. He did not answer the letter, and received a second, then a third. The third letter arrived Friday night.

The \$500 was to be left in a bottle at Beebe avenue

and Marion street, close to a swamp. The grocer took the letter to the Eighth Branch Detective Bureau, and there they cooked up a job on the man who wanted money.

Detectives Teeven, Mindheim and Di Gilio accompanied the grocer to the spot and, under their instructions he picked out a perfectly good, non-leakable bottle and put some money in it. Then they all hid.

In ten minutes a man appeared. It was soon plain that he was after a bottle. He pounced on the bottle containing the money. No sooner had he grasped it than the detectives fired several shots over his head. He dropped.

Next, the police court.

DOWN THE GRAND CANYON.

Romantic Indian legends surround the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. The Indians believed it the road to heaven. A great chief mourned the death of his wife. To him came the god Ta-vwoats and offered to prove that his wife was in a happier land by taking him there to look upon her happiness. Ta-vwoats then made a trail through the protecting mountains and led the chief to the happy land. Thus was created the canyon gorge of the Colorado. On their return, lest the unworthy should find this happy land, Ta-vwoats rolled through the trail a wild, surging river, calling into existence the Colorado.

One of the most stirring adventures in the history of American exploration took place at the Grand Canyon. For hundreds of miles the Colorado and its tributaries form a network of mighty chasms, which few had ventured even to enter.

Of the Grand Canyon, deepest and hughest of all, tales were current of whirlpools, of hundreds of miles of underground passages and of giant falls, whose roaring music could be heard on distant mountain summits. The Indians feared it, says the Washington Post. The hardiest frontiersmen dared not tempt it.

It remained for a geologist and a school teacher, a one-armed veteran of the Civil War, John Wesley Powell, afterward director of the United States Geological Survey, to dare and to accomplish it.

This was in 1869, and Powell, accompanied by nine men with four boats, succeeded in proving that there were no whirlpools that were impassable and that there were no underground passages nor cataraacts.

But the trip was hazardous in the extreme.

The adventurers faced the unknown at every hand, daily, sometimes several times daily, embarking upon swift rapids without guessing what rocks or in what great falls they might termina'

MAKING IT PAY

—OR—

The Boy Who Bought a Newspaper

BY WILLIAM WADE,

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XXIII (Continued).

"You are talking nonsense," said Dick. "I am going, but you need not be afraid that I will tell any one I have seen you. Go away and stay away, and no one will ever know you were here. Remain and you take chances."

Then Dick left the quarry, returned to the boat and rowed back as far as it was safe to go before landing.

Then procuring a considerable length of rope, a hatchet and a boat-hook, he left them in the boat and went to the bank for Jack who would be free at about the time of his arrival.

"I'm going after the money, Jack," said Dick, "and I want you to come along. The island has been washed away, and our old tree has caught on the dam just above the little bridge."

"Yes, I saw it there this morning, but I wasn't certain that it was the same. How are you going to get at it?"

"I'm going out in the boat."

"What! With the river as high as it is? You'll be swept over the falls."

"Oh, no. I won't. I'm going to fasten a rope to a tree on shore and the other end to our boat. It is just long enough to let me reach the tree. Then when we're ready to go back, we'll haul in on the rope, and be all right."

"H'm! You're quite a schemer, Dick. You ought to have been an engineer of some sort."

"That's all right. You'll go with me, of course?"

"Why 'of course,' old man?" asked Jack, dubiously.

"Because you are so much interested in this thing as I am, and because I can trust you in an emergency when a fellow needs to have his wits about him."

"Oh, well, if you put it that way, old man, I suppose I'll have to go with you and run the risk of being carried over the dam," laughed Jack.

They set out at once and soon reached the place where Dick had left the boat.

Making one end of the rope fast to a tree on shore, they first rowed straight out till they were opposite the point where the tree was caught on the dam, when they headed straight for it, Jack steering and Dick rowing.

The tree had grounded nearer to one bank than the other, and the rope was fastened on the nearer bank.

When they reached the tree, the rope would form a diagonal line from them to the mooring, and would be longer than from the mooring to the dam at the

bank, so that the danger was when they finally left the tree that they might still be carried over.

Dick knew the danger he ran, but he knew also that Jack had a cool head, and that he could be depended upon, and for these very reasons he had asked him to go along.

Jack steered a perfectly straight course, and Dick pulled a good, strong, steady stroke, so that owing to both the boat kept as straight as an arrow on her course and did not deviate a hair's breadth to the right or to the left.

The current would have carried them down without Dick's rowing, but the current took turns this way and that and had eddies, and went around shoals and bars and had numerous eccentricities, and Dick wished to go perfectly straight, so as to reach the dam just where the tree was and nowhere else.

There were men on the bridge and on the station platform and on the street leading along the river, and these soon noticed the boys and attracted the attention of others to them, and had much to say about the matter.

Some wondered why the boys were out on the river at such a place, and shouted warnings to them not to go too near the dam.

Others, recognizing the boys and knowing that they were good oarsmen, wanted to know what they were doing.

Others, seeing the rope and knowing that the boys must have a definite object, and suspecting that it had something to do with the stranded tree, gave them all sorts of advice and offered them help.

To all of these the boys paid not the slightest attention, but kept straight on, and the crowd grew and the interest increased.

"Mind your steering, Jack," said Dick, dipping his oars deeper and giving a stronger stroke as he felt the current catch the boat. "We must go straight, no matter how the current runs. There's water enough to float us anywhere."

"All right," answered Jack, keeping his eye on the tree and making a wake as straight as a plumb-line.

The line gradually tautened, but there was still slack enough, and Dick pulled stronger and steadier, while Jack never left his eyes off the point he aimed for.

The water bubbled and boiled around them, and cooler heads than theirs might have been terrified, but Dick knew his own strength and relied upon Jack, and so they went on, straight for the mark.

The crowd alongshore and on the bridge increased, but no one said anything now, as all seemed to feel that the boys knew exactly what they were about, and could be depended upon to accomplish it without suggestions or advice from any one.

Stronger and swifter grew the current, but stronger was Dick's stroke and steadier Jack's eye as the danger increased.

(To be continued.)

FACTS WORTH READING

COMPLETION OF MURMAN RAILWAY IN RUSSIA.

According to an article published by the Russian Chamber of Commerce in Paris, the Murman Railway has been completed and the first trains have been run to the Murman Coast. The length of the line from Petrograd to Alexandroosk is about 930 miles. The road follows the main line Petrograd-Vyatka-Perm to the station Zvanka, seventy-five miles east of Petrograd. There it turns north, passing Petrozavodsk on Lake Onega; Soroka, a small port on the western coast of the White Sea; and Kem, another small White Sea port, about thirty miles farther north. Turning to the northwest, the line reaches Kandalaksha, at the most westerly point of the White Sea, and leaving on the west Lake Tmandra and the small Lake Kola, whence issues the Kola River, a branch of the Touloma, it arrives at Kola, which is situated at the confluence of the two rivers. The railroad then follows the western shore of the estuary to Alexandrovsk, in Katherine Harbor.

BULLET-PROOF HELMET.

An extraordinary story of the development of the steel helmet now worn by the French soldiers and of how its almost unbelievable impenetrability was acquired, is told in the Scientific American by Edward C. Crossman.

He tells how two officials of an old Philadelphia steel company took a helmet to the testing station of one of the largest American manufacturers of explosives and asked that its bullet-resisting qualities be tested. A shot fired at eighty yards penetrated it cleanly. A few days later the men returned with another helmet which was tested with similar result. A third, fourth and fifth time they submitted helmets. This was in the first year of the war.

Finally they brought a helmet merely dented where the bullet struck it. Yet another was tried and against this the bullet was shattered. And it was a special bullet of 180 grains, with a muzzle velocity of 2,700 feet per second and striking a blow of 2,900 foot-pounds. It shot holes through half-inch boiler plate at the muzzle and through quarter-inch plates at 500 yards. But at forty yards it took eight of these bullets to shatter the helmet, though this weighed only about six pounds.

"Evidently," writes Mr. Crossman, "the material was some alloy like tungsten, heat-treated, and not only hard but tough. The shattering under the final blow indicated a glass-like hardness that was still devoid of the brittleness of most very hard and thin steel plates."

DOUM NUTS.

An increased demand for a less expensive button material has brought into commerce a substitute for the tagua, corozo or South American ivory nuts (*Phytelephas Macrocarpa*). Substitute vegetable ivory is now being imported into Europe and to a small extent into the United States under the trade name of ginger-bread doum, doom or dum nuts of northern Africa, which are the seeds of a common palm botanically called *Hyphene thebacia*. This palm and a few closely related species are found throughout northern Africa. They form small trees rarely exceeding 25 or 30 feet in height with stems which are frequently three or four times forked as shown in the illustration. The fruits grow in long clusters, each containing from one to two hundred; they are beautifully polished, of a rich yellowish brown color and are irregular shaped. Practically all shipments of these nuts which have thus far been made have come from Port Said. The Italian, German and French button manufacturers consume more doum nuts than all the other European firms taken together. *NO - DON'T BELIEVE IT!*

The supply of these nuts is unlimited. They can be bought at about one-third as much as the true ivory nuts from South America. In the Hamburg markets the price fluctuates from 2 to 3 cents per pound, and as the South American kind decreases in the market value the African produce decreases proportionately. While the export of these nuts from Africa is constantly increasing, the shipments to the United States have been only in small quantities of ten or twelve tons each. The cheapness of the price is the reason for its introduction, but unfortunately the experiments made have not proved very satisfactory. The machinery installed in the button factories here is made to manufacture buttons out of the South American nuts and cannot be easily adapted to manufacturing buttons out of the African kinds, which are too soft, have too thick a coating, and the hole in the center is too large. The vegetable ivory nut from South America produces on an average fifteen good serviceable buttons, while the African yields only from five to six; and under the present methods of manufacture and treatment the buttons made from the latter occasionally shrivel and warp. It is believed that sooner or later better methods of handling and treating both the raw material and the finished product will enable manufacturers profitably to install new machinery especially designed to manufacture buttons, marbles, and an innumerable variety of small toys and trinkets out of these African nuts, which are not only cheaper but available in much larger quantities than those from South America or from the South Sea Islands.

FROM ALL POINTS

HUGE AIRPLANE BUILT FOR ITALY

A representative of the Fiat Company in Turin, Italy, who arrived recently on the steamship Noor-dam, says that the company has built for the Italian army an airplane with 100-foot wing spread and two motors developing 1,100 horse-power. This craft, he asserts, can carry eight men, two cannon and two machine guns and weighs 8 tons when loaded. It was being tested when he left Turin, and the plan was to head for Vienna on the first long flight.

The builders figure that it can cross the ocean easily.

The company has made plans to turn out two of the huge aircraft a day. *WHY?*

UNIQUE TYPE OF PLOW.

The fact that practically the entire surface of the areas susceptible to cultivation in western Australia is heavily wooded and that the dearth and cost of labor preclude the clearing of the land of stumps and roots, makes necessary the use of a special type of plow known as the "stump-jump." This is so constructed that it will roll over stumps and other obstructions lying on the ground. The plow was invented by an Australian and, so far, has been manufactured only in that country. In breaning up new lands preference is given to the stump-jump disk plow, as it will cut many roots that a moldboard plow would leave untouched. As the land becomes cleaner of roots after two or three years application of this treatment, the stump-jump moldboard is preferred because of its better soil turning qualities. *HOGS BE BETTER*

VOTES SOLD AT \$1 EACH.

Twenty-seven men arrested on indictments returned by the Federal grand jury which investigated alleged frauds at the last Presidential election pleaded guilty to vote selling when arraigned in the United States District Court at Cincinnati, Ohio. Three others indicted on the same charge pleaded not guilty. These three and the twenty-seven who pleaded guilty, and whose sentences were deferred by Judge Howard Hollister, were ordered committed to jail. *FOR DINNER*

In addition to the aforesaid, three other men indicted on the charge of vote buying were arrested recently. They were released on bond. *NO DINNER*

Of the ninety-nine men indicted by the grand jury, fifty-three have been brought into court. Nearly all of the men who pleaded guilty to vote selling were residents of low priced lodging houses. Each man admitted that he had sold his vote on the last Presidential election day for \$1. In several instances they gave the names of the men alleged to have paid for their votes.

GREATEST ARCH SPAN IN THE WORLD.

The steel arch bridge across Hell Gate from Ward's Island to the Bronx will soon be ready for traffic. It is the heaviest and greatest arch bridge in the world, having a span of 1016 feet 10 inches. It will enable passengers on railroad trains to pass through New York City going north or south without any of the inconveniences hitherto encountered.

The Hell Gate bridge is the work of the Pennsylvania Railroad. It will save time and money in the operation of the road for freight and passenger purposes. It is part of a ten-mile project known as the New York Connecting Railroad. The East River Division of this small line cost \$30,000,000 alone. All told, it is the most expensive railroad ever built.

This division, of which the bridge is a part, covers three and one-half miles. The bridge represents an outlay of \$12,000,000. It took 19,000 tons of steel alone for the structure. It is the longest four-track railroad bridge, and is able to support a greater load per lineal foot than any other bridge extant. It is expected that the railroad for which the bridge was built and which will connect New England with Bay Ridge, will be in operation April 1. *WOW!*

\$900 PAID FOR HALF OF A POSTAGE STAMP.

Stamp collectors were much interested in the sale for \$900 recently of a United States postage stamp of the first series issued by the Post Office Department. A New York capitalist was the purchaser and the price was a record.

The stamp was found recently among a package of dusty documents in the Government archives at Washington. It was issued in 1847, after the discontinuance of the practice of individual Postmasters printing their own franking labels, and is a ten-cent blue, on bluish paper, bearing a portrait of Washington.

Ordinarily this is not an uncommon stamp, but this specimen was one used as a half stamp and pre-paying only 5 cents postage. It had been cut horizontally and consequently paid postage to only half its face value, thus enhancing its philatelic worth many times over.

At the Collectors' Club, No. 30 East Forty-second street, it was said recently the price paid for this stamp is the highest on record. Among the nearest approaches to this figure was when a Yale professor paid \$670 last April for one of the famous missionary stamps of Hawaii, issued in 1851.

Two stamps were also sold at the Collectors' Club last April which brought \$890 and \$840 respectively. But they were not of the Government issue, but had been issued by the Postmaster of Brattleboro, Vt., in 1846. Their value was enhanced by the fact that they were both cancelled and on the original envelopes.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MARCH 14, 1917.

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Good Current News Articles

An unused flue in the Robert Peters home east of Junction City, Kan., was used by a swarm of bees during the last summer. This fact was discovered recently when the flue cap was removed in order to set up a stove. Several gallons of honey were removed, and the quantity remaining in the flue is very large.

The 1,500,000 candle-power searchlight recently installed on the flying field at Hempstead, Long Island, is soon to be tested in order to determine its value in detecting aircraft at night. It is planned to have aviators go up in biplanes, followed by others who are to represent the enemy, whereupon the searchlight will find each hostile machine and keep it illuminated while the other planes, hidden by darkness, will attack and destroy it. It is also planned to have the defenders' planes drop various colored lights as a guide to those on the ground in locating the intended prey. The searchlight has a range of four miles.

Forgetting that their finger prints are bound to betray them, many deserters, who have adopted fictitious names, are attempting to re-enter the U. S. Army, Navy and Marine Corps, since the breaking of diplomatic relations with Germany. Recruiting offices have been flooded with this class of applicants, who trust to luck or indifference on the part of the military authorities to cover up their misdemeanor, according to Capt. Frank E. Evans, of the U. S. Marine Corps, in New York City. It is believed that the present patriotic wave has awakened many of these deserters to a sense of duty, but a comparison of their tell-tale finger prints with the originals, kept on file in Washington, proves a bar to their further service.

The sore straits to which Germany has been put in the matter of high explosives by the blockade,

which has cut her off entirely from the great source of supply in Chile, is an object lesson of which note has been taken by this country. Evidence of this is seen in the proposal to utilize water power in hydro-electric plants for the extraction of nitrogen from the atmosphere. The Chief of Ordnance also, in his annual report for 1916, stated that in his last report he drew attention to the important part played by nitric acid in the manufacture of smokeless powder and high explosives, and to the fact that nitrogen in nitric acid is obtained from sodium nitrate. Congress has met this situation by appropriating a considerable sum for increasing the reserve supply of sodium nitrate.

Grins and Chuckles

He—Ah, well, a woman can easily make a fool of a man. She—She has no need. She has merely to develop him.

"I'm in a get-rich-quick scheme this time sure," said the optimist. "Which end of it?" "I don't understand." "Do you give or receive?"

"Does de white folks in youah neighborhood keep any chickens, Br'er Rastus?" "Well, Br'er John-sing, mebbe dey does keep a few."

"Were you in the Ark with Noah, grandpapa?" "No, my child, I was not in the Ark with Noah." "Then why weren't you drowned?"

Mrs. Green—Does your husband object to decollete gowns? Mrs. Wise—Oh, no; he spent three years in Africa once, you know.

"I saw a picture of a group of children who will be rulers of men some day." "Must be girl children, aren't they?"

"You reckon these fault-finding brethren go to heaven?" "Some of 'em will have to. The other place is too full of 'em."

Reporter—So they tell me that you and Branningham were calm and collected after the explosion? O'Flanagan—Well, sor, I was calm, but poor Branningham wor collected.

Little Brother—I am sure that if I were not in the room the lieutenant would kiss you. Sister—You naughty boy! How can you say such a thing! Run out of the room at once!

"Up to our house," said Tommy, proudly, "we've got a baby that jest come the other night." "Oh!" retorted little Elsie, disdainfully, "that isn't anything stylish. They're common things. Our wash-erwoman got one."

INTERESTING ARTICLES

STATISTICS OF FOREST FIRES.

The Forest Service has recently undertaken to secure annual statistics and estimates concerning forest fires in the United States, and has published such data for the year 1915. In some States the reports collected relate to the whole forested area of the State, but in others reports were not available for all forests and have therefore been supplemented by estimates. On this basis it is announced that there were about 40,000 fires during the year, which burned over about 6,000,000 acres, or 1.1 per cent of the total forest area of the country. The money loss in timber and improvements was not less than \$7,000,000, which does not include the loss in young tree growth on large areas outside the national forests, nor the great damage from soil deterioration and floods. Seventy-four per cent of the fires were of known origin, and of these lightning accounted for about one-seventh. Most fires occurred from preventable causes.

KEEPS THEM WARM WHILE THEY EAT.

"Six for the feet," yelled William the Waiter.

"Coming up," came the echo from the kitchen.

Smilingly, Jean the Chef placed half a dozen hard, inedible objects in the oven. Thirty minutes later he opened the door, and, wetting a forefinger, tapped one of them. There was a sizzle and a little puff of steam.

"Done to a turn," he mused.

The front door opened and six merry misses from the Monroe Telephone Exchange entered the restaurant, No. 1053 Madison street, Chicago.

William disappeared in the rear and re-entered, struggling with a heavily laden tray, a broad grin on his face, which was red with exertion.

Beneath each small table he placed two hot bricks, which chased the chills from the neat feet resting comfortably upon them.

"Some service," said the owners of these extremities, beaming thanks.

BASS FOR GATUN LAKE.

At the request of the authorities of the Canal Zone the United States Bureau of Fisheries recently sent here 21 large tin cans containing 450 black bass, 500 rock bass, 1,000 catfish and 800 sunfish, which have been distributed in Gatun Lake in order to determine whether such fish will thrive in its waters.

As this lake varies from an abundance of shallow water to a depth of eight-five feet, and as it is very irregular in shape, dotted over with islands and generally bordered with a forest growth, it seems to be an ideal place for the propagation of fish adapted to a tropical climate.

If the present experiment succeeds this lake, which

covers 164 square miles, might furnish enough fish to meet a considerable part of the demand for fresh fish in the Canal Zone.

While such additional fish would be desirable at any time, it would be important to have this reserve supply to depend upon in case of any difficulty in obtaining the Atlantic or Pacific side of the Isthmus.

JESSE POMEROY WINS HIS "STRIKE."

Jesse Pomeroy has won his "strike." He will have more privileges than any other prisoner, but will not be required to work.

Warden Allen of the State Prison at Charlestown capitulated—at a suggestion from the State House, it is understood—and the notorious "lifer" was taken from the little detention cell in which he was placed in punishment for his refusal to do light work ordered by the warden and given the comfortable cell he has occupied for many years.

The door of his cell will be open most of the day, and he will have almost as much freedom as allowed to a trusty. Thus Pomeroy, already the most "famous" prisoner in the country, becomes overnight the most privileged.

Governor McCall and the Executive Council passed an order which released the prisoner from the solitary confinement he has been kept in for forty-one years, with the understanding that he was to have light work. Pomeroy, protesting that he wanted a full pardon or nothing, refused to do the work ordered, and the warden started to make him submit.

ICE CRAFT BLOWN UP IN RUSSIAN PORT.

"While the ice breaker Cheliuskin was unloading at Archangel an explosion occurred and fire broke out, which spread to various parts of the wharf. The fire damaged various buildings near the railway station, some depots, sheds and abutments. A set of moorings also was damaged.

"In addition to the Cheliuskin a tug was destroyed and five other steamers were damaged, three of them only slightly.

"Three hundred and forty-four persons were injured, including three officers and ninety-nine soldiers. Fifty-nine persons were injured severely. The number of killed has not been definitely established, but it is feared that about thirty lost their lives.

"The scene of the disaster was cleared for traffic by January 31 and the usual work of loading and unloading is proceeding without delay."

In an explosion in the harbor of Gakaritza, near Archangel, last November, two British steamships, the Baron Driesen and the Earl of Forfar, were destroyed. Three hundred and forty-one persons were killed and 667 wounded.

KNITTER

Every boy who wants a whip-lash pair of reins, or any other knitted article of similar kind should have a Knitter. Anybody can work it. The most beautiful designs can be made by using colored worsteds with this handy little object. It is handsomely lacquered, strongly made, and the wires are very durable. Price, 10c. each, by mail, postpaid. Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

WHO DROPPED THE EGG?

The most screaming comic catch of modern times. Drop it anywhere on the table or the floor and await results.

The shell is a real egg shell, but the white and yolk of the egg is made of wax. The exact size and color of a real broken egg. No one for a moment would think it other than an ordinary hen's egg, carelessly dropped on the floor. After receiving a good scolding for your carelessness, pick it up and tell your parents not to fry or scramble it for your breakfast, as you wish to keep it for further use. Price 10c; 3 for 25, mailed postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

A PECK OF TROUBLE.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 5 | 3 | |
| 4 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 8 | 8 |
| 7 | 4 | 7 | 8 |

One of the hardest puzzles ever invented. Mix blocks well; then move squares without removing the box, so that every line of figures, up and down and across, and the two diagonals, will each add up 23. The Blank space may be left in either of the four corners.

Price 10 cts. each by mail, postpaid. Wolff Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

SECOR SPARKLER.



Hold discs in each hand and twist the strings by swinging the toy around and around about 30 times. Then move the hands apart, pulling on the discs and causing the strings to untwist. This will rotate the wheel and cause the sparks to fly. The continued rotation of the wheel will again twist the strings. When this twisting commences slacken the strings slightly until they are full twisted, then pull.

Price 25 cts. each by mail, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., N. Y.

THE MODERN DANCERS.



These dancers are set in a gilt frame, the size of our engraving. By lighting a match and moving it in circular form at the back they can be made to dance furiously, the heat from the match warming them up. If you want to see an up-to-date tango dance send for this pretty charm.

Price, 15 cents, or 3 for 40 cents, sent by mail, postpaid. WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

THE BALANCING BIRD.



It measures more than four inches from tip to tip of wings, and will balance perfectly on the tip of your finger nail, on the point of a lead pencil, or on any pointed instrument, only the tip of the bill resting on the nail or pencil point, the whole body of the bird being suspended in the air with nothing to rest on. It will not fall off unless shaken off. A great novelty. Wonderful, amusing and instructive.

Price 10 cents, mailed postpaid. WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

SHERIFF BADGE.



With this badge attached to your coat or vest you can show the boys that you are a sheriff, and if they don't behave themselves you might lock them up. It is a beautiful nickel-plated badge, 2 1/4 by 2 1/2 inches in size, with the words "Sheriff 23. By Heck" in nickel letters on the face of it, with a pin on the back for attaching it to your clothing. Send for one and have some fun with the boys.

Price 15 cents, or 3 for 40 cents; sent by mail, postpaid. H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC MIND READING



Wonderful! Startling! Scientific! You hand a friend a handsome set of cards on which are printed the names of the 28 United States Presidents. Ask him to secretly select a name and hold the card to his forehead and think of the name. Like a flash comes the answer "Lincoln Washington," or whatever name he is thinking of. The more you repeat it the more puzzling it becomes. With our outfit you can do it anywhere, any time, with anybody. Startle your friends. Do it at the next party or at your club and be the lion of the evening. This was invented by a famous magician.

Price, with complete set of cards and full instructions, 12 cents, mailed, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

STEEL DISC GUN.



This gun has a powerful steel spring, which shoots a disc from 150 to 200 feet in the air. With each gun we send fifteen discs, containing different sayings, as "Kiss me, kiddo, nothing makes me sick," "My, you look good, let's get acquainted," "Put a damper on your jaw tackle," "I lub my yaller gal, but oh, you Chocolate Drops," "Say, old man, pay me them two bits," etc. Young folks are delighted with them. Each gun packed in a box with 15 discs.

Price complete, 12 cents; 3 for 30 cents; 1 dozen, \$1; sent by parcel post, prepaid. Extra discs 4 cents per dozen. WOLFF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

DIAMOND SQUIRT RING.



A handsome Gilt ring set with a brilliant, a close imitation of a diamond. Connected with the ring is a small rubber ball filled with water, which is concealed in the palm of your hand. As your friend is admiring the stone in your ring, a gentle pressure on the ball will throw a small stream of water into his face. The ball can be instantly filled by immersing it in water, when you are ready for your next victim. The ball is entirely hidden in the palm of your hand, and only the ring is seen.

Price 25 cents, by mail, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

To the Wife of One Who Drinks

I have an important confidential message for you. It will come in a plain envelope. How to conquer the liquor habit in 3 days and make home happy. Wonderful, safe, lasting, reliable, inexpensive method, guaranteed. Write to Edw. J. Woods, 228 S. Station B, New York, N. Y. Show this to others.



NEW GEM CIGARETTE ROLLER. Nickel silver case to carry in vest pocket. Makes a perfect cigarette at once. A 5-cent package tobacco makes 70 to 80 regular size cigarettes; less than 1 cent per dozen. Saves time, money and health. Price 15 cents by mail (stamps taken). Boston Novelty Co., Dept. 3 Melrose, Mass.

2 to \$500 EACH paid for hundreds of old Coins. Keep ALL money dated before 1895 and send TEN cents for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, size 4x7. It may mean your Fortune. CLARKE COIN Co., Box 95, Le Roy, N. Y.

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O! How She Dances!

Step right up close boys and see "The Hula Maiden" do those wiggling Hawaiian dances that will open your eyes. Absolutely the latest and niftiest novelty out. Simple to operate, no match required. Send TWO dimes at once for "The Hula Dancer" and treat your friends to some real fun—but don't let your girl see it. Agents make big money; 3 for 50c—\$1.50 dozen.

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MEAD CYCLE COMPANY Dept. H 188 CHICAGO



ELECTRIC CIGAR CASE.



This handsome cigar case appears to be filled with fine cigars. If your friend smokes ask him to have a cigar with you. As he reaches out for one the cigars, like a flash, instantly disappear into the case entirely out of sight, greatly to his surprise and astonishment. You can beg his pardon and state you thought there were some cigars left in the case. A slight pressure on sides of case causes the cigars to disappear as if by magic. By touching a wire at bottom of case the cigars instantly appear again in their proper position in the case. As real tobacco is used they are sure to deceive any one. It is one of the best practical jokes of the season. A novelty with which you can have lots of fun.

Price 35 cents, sent by parcel post, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.



The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

THE JOKE SPIKE.



This joke spike is an ordinary iron spike or very large nail, the same as is found in any carpenter's nail box. At the small end is a small steel needle, 1/2 inch in length, firmly set in spike. Take your friend's hat or coat and hang it on the wall by driving (with a hammer) the spike through it into the wall; the needle in spike will not injure the hat or garment, neither will it show on wall or wood where it has been driven. The deception is perfect, as the spike appears to have been driven half-way through the hat or coat, which can be left hanging on the wall. Price, 10 cents, or 3 for 25 cents; by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d Street, N. Y.

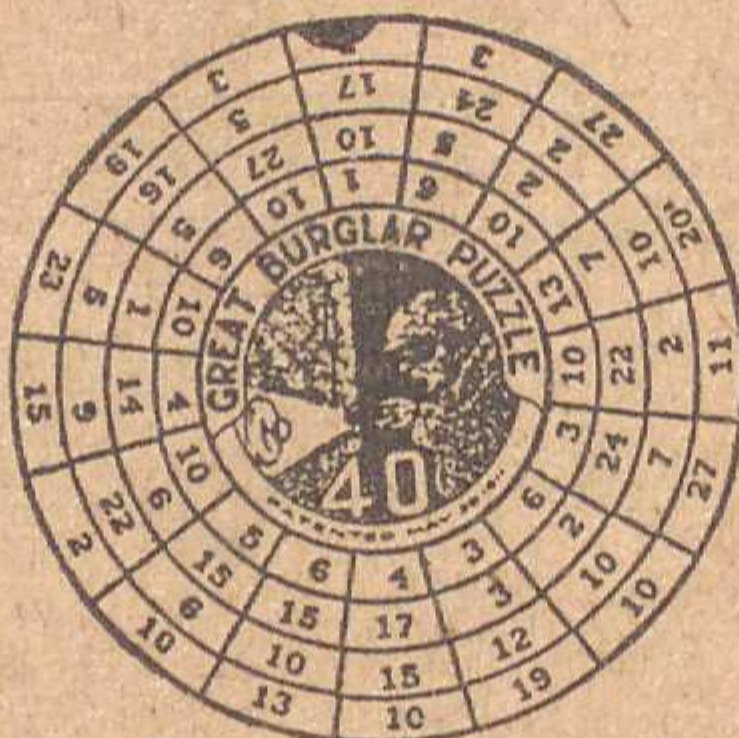
RUBBER TACKS.



They come six in a box. A wonderful imitation of the real tack. Made of rubber. The box in which they come is the ordinary tack box. This is a great parlor entertainer and you can play a lot of tricks with the tacks. Place them in the palm of your hand, point upward. Then slap the other hand over the tacks and it will seem as if you are committing suicide. Or you can show the tacks and then put them in your mouth and chew them, making believe you have swallowed them. Your friends will think you are a magician. Then, again, you can exhibit the tacks and then quickly push one in your cheek or somebody else's cheek and they will shriek with fear. Absolutely harmless and a very practical and funny joke. Price, by mail, 10c. a box of six tacks; 3 for 25c.

WOLF Novelty Co., 168 W. 23d St., N. Y.

GREAT BURGLAR PUZZLE.



The latest and most fascinating puzzle ever placed on the market. Patented May 30. It consists of four revolving dials, each dial containing 16 figures, 64 figures in all. To open the safe these dials must be turned around until the figures in each of the 16 columns added together total 40. The puzzle is made on the plan of the combination lock on the large iron safes that open on a combination of figures. Persons have been known to sit up all night, so interested have they become trying to get each column to total 40, in this fascinating puzzle. With the printed key which we send with each puzzle the figures can be set in a few minutes so as to total 40 in each column.

Price 15 cents; mailed, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

LUCKY PENNY POCKET PIECE.



This handsome pocket piece is made of aluminum, resembling somewhat in size and appearance a silver dollar. In the center of the pocket piece is a new one-cent U. S. coin, inserted in such a way that it cannot be removed. (U. S. laws prevent our showing this coin in our engraving). On one side of the pocket piece are the words, "Lucky penny pocket piece; I bring good luck," and the design of a horseshoe. On the opposite side, "I am your mascot," "Keep me and never go broke," and two sprigs of four-leafed clover. These handsome pocket pieces are believed by many to be harbingers of good luck.

Price 12 cents; 3 for 30 cents; by mail, postpaid.

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HALF MASKS.



False-faces beaten a mile! There are 7 in a set and represent an Indian, a Japanese girl, a clown, Foxy Grandpa, an English Johnny Atkins and an Automobilst. Beautifully lithographed in handsome colors on a durable quality of cardboard. They have eyeholes and string perforations. Price, 6c. each, or the full set of 7 for 25c., postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

SNAPPER CIGAR.

The real thing for the cigar grafter. If you smoke you must have met him. He sees a few choice cigars in your pocket and makes no bones about asking you for one. You are all prepared for him this time. How? Take one of these cigars snappers (which is so much like a real cigar you are liable to smoke it yourself by mistake). Bend the spring backwards the lighted end, and as you offer the cigar let go the spring and the victim gets a sharp, stinging snap on the fingers. A sure cure for grafters. Price, by mail, ten cents each, or three for 25c.

C. BEHR, 150 62d St., New York City.

GOOD LUCK GUN FOB.



The real western article. carried by the cowboys. It is made of fine leather, with a highly nickeled buckle. The holster contains a metal gun, of the same pattern as those used by all the most famous scouts. Any boy wearing one of these fobs will attract attention. It will give him an air of western romance. The prettiest and most serviceable watch fob ever made. Send for one to-day. Price 20 cents each by mail postpaid.

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